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Employment opportunities for adults with the label of 'learning difficulties' in England

**A Thesis Submitted In Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph-D) in Special Educational Needs**

By

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Abstract

This study considered employment opportunities and realities of work for adults with learning difficulties in England (post the 2001, White Paper *Valuing People*) with the view to developing opportunities for people in Iran. An eclectic approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods was adopted. Thus I studied the lives of six workers with learning difficulties and considered the case files of a further 200 similar employees in the English city of Northtown in order to develop an understanding of their employment experiences and to gain insight into the perceptions of their employers in mainstream workplaces. Twenty one employers completed a survey questionnaire and 12 were interviewed. I also investigated how supported employment providers (SEPs) promote ‘meaningful work’ opportunities for people with learning difficulties. The research findings helped me to formulate policy recommendations and applications for Iran.

The social model of learning difficulties was the main stance of this research. The research showed that people with learning difficulties were excluded from many aspects of life particularly employment, due to the social, cultural, political and structural barriers within society. All the SEPs and most employers perceived employees with learning difficulties as capable, punctual, reliable, willing, hard-working very helpful and trustworthy workers. This study highlighted that the current supported employment programme, despite supporting employees with learning difficulties at work and increasing the employers’ awareness of their ability was not successful in enabling people in gaining meaningful work. The Workstep programme, however, did appear to help people with learning difficulties to get paid jobs.

This thesis recommends further reflexive empirical research regarding the employment of people with learning difficulties both in England and in Iran.

IN THE NAME OF GOD

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFSE Association for Supported Employment

ATC Adult Training Centres

ATW Access to Work

BA Benefits Agency

BCODP the British Council of Disabled People

CBR Community Based Rehabilitation programme

CTB Credit Taxes Benefit

DDA. Disability Discrimination Act

DEA Disability Employment Adviser

DETR Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions

DfEE Department for Education and Employment

DfES Department for Education and Skills

DLA Disability Living Allowance

DoH Department of Health

DPEA Disabled Persons Employment Act

DPI Disabled People's International

DPTAC Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee

DPTC Disabled Person's Tax Credit

DRC Disability Rights Commission

DRTF Disability Rights Task Force

DSA Disabled Student's Allowance

DSS Department of Social Security

DWA Disability Working Allowance

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

EA Education Authority

EPA Employment Protection Act

ETA Employment and Training Act

ES Employment Service

FE Further Education

GB Great Britain

GLAD Greater London Action on Disability

HB Housing Benefits

HMSO Her Majesty's Stationery Office
IB Incapacity Benefit
ICIDH International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps
IJO Iranian Janbazan Organisation
ILO International Labour Organisation
ILSDP Iranian Legislation for Supporting Disabled People
IPJO Isfahan Province Janbazan Organisation
IPWO Isfahan Province Welfare Organisation
IS Income Support
IWO Iranian Welfare Organisation
JB Job Brokers
JP Jobcentre Plus
JRF Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LA Local Authority
LEA Local Education Authority
LKC Learning and Skills Councils
LSC Learning and Skills Council
MoW Ministry of Welfare
MSRT Ministry of Science, Research and Technology
NDDP New Deal for Disabled People
NGOs Non-Governmental Organisations
NHS National Health Service
NI National Insurance
NMW National Minimum Wage
NPTC National Proficiency Training Certificate
PA Personal Adviser
PCT Primary Care Trust
PMSU Prime Minister's Strategy Unit
PSHE Personal Social and Health Education
PW Permitted Work
SDA Severe Disability Allowance
SEAs Supported Employment Agencies
SEN Special Educational Needs
SEP Supported Employment Programme

SEPs Supported Employment Providers
SF Social Firms
SPS Supported Placement Scheme
SPS Sheltered Placements Scheme
SPSS Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSB Social Security Benefits
TE Therapeutic Earning
TWA Transport and Works Act
VP Valuing People
VW Voluntary Work
WE Work Experience
WHO World Health Organization
WP Workstep Programme
WP Work Preparation
WP White Paper
WTC Working Tax Credit
WtW JIP Welfare to Work Joint Investment Plan
UK United Kingdom
UPIAS Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
USA United State America

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Publications arising from the project

Full length publication

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Goodley, D., and Norouzi, G. (2005) "Enabling futures for people with learning difficulties? Exploring employment realities behind the rhetoric of policy" In C. Barnes and A. Roulstone (Eds) Working Futures. London: Polity

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- 1) Special Educational Needs in Iran in the 8th Iranian Students' Seminar in Europe in UMIST, Manchester, United Kingdom 5-7 May 2001
- 2) Employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties in Annual Interdisciplinary Day Conference for Postgraduate Students in the Social Science and Humanities on 7th February 2002 in Elmfield, Sheffield University, UK
- 3) Vocational Barriers for Adults with learning difficulties in the 9th Iranian Students' Seminar in Europe, Birmingham University, UK 30-31 June 2002
- 4) The nature of the employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties in Annual Interdisciplinary Day Conference for Postgraduate Students in the Social Science and Humanities on 10th June 2003 in Elmfield, Sheffield University, UK
- 5) The climate of the vocational opportunities for adults with learning difficulties, paper presented at the Disability Studies: Theory, Policy and Practice, University of Lancaster, United Kingdom 4-6 September 2003
- 6) Employment barriers for adults with learning difficulties in Northtown, paper presented at the Bera Annual Conference in Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University, United Kingdom, 10-13 September 2003
- 7) Employment experiences of a woman (2004a)(Sheila Davies) with the label of 'Learning difficulties', paper presented at the 12th Iranian Researchers

Conference in Europe, University of Manchester, United Kingdom, 2-3 July 2004

- 8) Employment experiences of a woman (2004b) (Lisa Watkins) with the label of 'Learning difficulties', poster presented at the Social History of Learning Disability Conference: Work in the lives of people with learning difficulties, Open University, United Kingdom, 13th July 2004
- 9) The employment experiences of six adults with the label of 'Learning Difficulties' (2004c), paper presented at the International Disability Studies Conference: Putting Theory Into Practice, University of Lancaster, United Kingdom, 26-28 July 2004
- 10) Educational and vocational experiences of a person (Roy Watson) with the label of 'learning difficulties' (2004d), paper presented at the Bera Annual Conference in UMIST Manchester, United Kingdom, 16-18 September 2004

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CHAPTER ONE: Setting the scene: Introduction to the study and the research questions

Introduction

This chapter presents the aims, objectives and key research questions of this study and offers an outline of the thesis.

Aims of the research

I had a number of reasons for embarking on this study. The first is my personal interest in studying employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties which emerges from my personal experiences in my home country of Iran. While I was a vocational rehabilitation director in the Iranian Janbazan Organisation (IJO) and the rehabilitation director in the Isfahan Province Welfare Organisation (IPWO), I came across many disabled people who faced difficulties in getting jobs. I was curious both about what factors prevented them from getting jobs and also about what support there was to help them gain employment. During my BA and MA studies, when managing rehabilitation organisations for disabled people and during my research and lectureship at Isfahan University in Iran, many questions confronted me. Why were most people with learning difficulties unemployed in Iranian society? Were there any job opportunities for people with learning difficulties in other societies? If yes, what types of opportunities? What were the employment services for people with learning difficulties in the UK? What were the employers' attitudes towards people with learning difficulties in the UK? What were the supported employment services for people with learning difficulties in the UK? In order to address some of these questions and also to find some ways of overcoming employment barriers in Iran I decided to come to England to see what was happening there.

The aims of this research are to investigate:

1. The realities of work and employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties
2. The experiences and perspectives of employers working with employees with learning difficulties
3. The experiences and perspectives of supported employment providers (SEPs) working with people with learning difficulties
4. To consider how the UK experience can inform thinking on overcoming employment barriers and promoting the employment of people with learning difficulties in Iran

Based on my aims there are four main research questions:

- 1. What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of post-Valuing People White Paper?**

Post ‘Valuing People’ refers to after *the 2001 White Paper, Valuing People: A new strategy for learning disability for the 21st century (Department of Health, 2001)*. The question will be addressed by studying the real lives of six workers with learning difficulties and considering case files of 200 employees with learning difficulties working in a city in the North of England (NORTHTOWN). I will consider the meaning of the term ‘realities of work’ in Chapter Five. Reality is subjective. ‘Rather than being a neutral, rational-technical activity, it is a non rational undertaking, a form of cultural engagement that yields different kinds of socially constructed possible knowledge, depending on the paradigm that serves as the observers’ metatheoretical frame of reference’ (Skrtic, 1995: 20). The answer to this research question and related suggestions based on my findings will be presented in Chapter Seven.

- 2. How are people with learning difficulties experienced and perceived by their employers in mainstream employment?**

The existing literature on employment for disabled people (see Chapter Three) tends to focus on the negative attitudes of employers as a key barrier to employing people with learning difficulties. In contrast, in this research I will consider the experiences and perspectives of those employers who are proactively working with employees with learning difficulties in mainstream workplaces. This research question will be addressed

by use of a survey questionnaire of 21 employers (Appendix One), and 12 semi-structured interviews (Appendix Two) with employers. Chapter Eight explores the findings that emerge from these methods.

3. How do supported employment providers (SEPs) promote ‘meaningful work’ opportunities for people with learning difficulties?

The existing literature on supported employment services for disabled people (explored in Chapter Three) emphasised that supported employment is a very important way of enabling people with learning difficulties to find and hold down real jobs in open employment. The supported employment services also provide additional support through several public, private and voluntary sector organisations. In this research, I will investigate how supported employment providers help people with learning difficulties to obtain ‘meaningful work’. The meaning of the term ‘meaningful work’ will be considered further in Chapter Nine. Briefly, I will argue that one of the important components of meaningful work is having a paid job in mainstream employment that enables people with learning difficulties ‘to participate in more culturally valued situations’ (Wilson, 2003: 100). The experiences and perspectives of eight SEPs gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews are presented. The findings of this question will be explored in Chapter Nine.

In this research, I will access the different perspectives of people with learning difficulties, employers and SEPs to understand their experiences and interpretations of environmental, physical, social, structural, political, historical and cultural aspects of employment and the lives of people with learning difficulties.

4. How can the findings from this thesis contribute to the promotion of the participation of people with learning difficulties in Iranian society?

One of the duties of the Iranian Welfare Organisation (IWO) is to provide vocational training for disabled people and assisting them in gaining suitable work. According to the IWO (1996), ninety percent of disabled people in Iran need to access vocational rehabilitative services but only 10-15 percent of them do so. The unemployment rate for them is therefore very high. Among disabled people, people with hearing and physical impairment have fewer problems in the community. But more than 70 percent of those

people with visual impairment, particularly those who live in rural areas, are unemployed. Among disabled people, those with learning difficulties have the highest unemployment rate with 97 percent of people with moderate and mild learning difficulties being out of work (IPWO, 2005). People with learning difficulties, particularly those who live in urban areas have many difficulties in their lives in the community such as a lack of self-esteem, self-confidence, income, job, social dignity, friendship, marriage and life skills. They also have low social status in their own families and communities. Therefore, in chapter 10, the findings of this research will be considered in terms of how they could influence policy making, service provision and practice in Iran

Outline of the thesis

Chapter Two tells of my personal experiences with disabled people in Iran. These included teaching experience, experience as a vocational rehabilitation director in the IJO and as a rehabilitation director in the IPWO and membership of various associations of disabled people.

Chapter Three considers the existing literature on employment opportunities for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties. Firstly, I shall outline the value of work for disabled people. Secondly, I will review the background to the employment in Britain, of disabled people in general, and those with learning difficulties and women in particular. Thirdly, I shall explore employment and welfare policies. Fourthly, I will discuss the climate and characteristics of the work opportunities for people with learning difficulties. Finally, barriers to the employment of people with learning difficulties and ways of overcoming barriers will be considered in relation to making some recommendations to improve legislation, policies, service provision and practices for people with learning difficulties in Iran.

Chapter Four provides a theoretical framework for my study. In this chapter, the individual (medical) model of disability in which the nature of disability and impairment are interpreted in terms of individual impairment will be outlined. Then, some limitations of the model will be considered. After that, the social model of disability and its limitations will be discussed and the experiences of people with learning difficulties will be considered in its light. In this chapter also the social model of learning difficulties which is one part of the social disability perspective will be

justified as the main stance of this research. Finally, a model of my research journey will be explored through the consideration of the theoretical framework for my research.

Chapter Five describes my research methodology, identifies the sources from which I have obtained my data and describes the methods involved in collecting the data. It also describe the main dilemmas and ethical issues of my research.

Chapter Six presents and explores the life stories of six workers with learning difficulties. It considers the lives of the informants and focuses on their personal, social, educational, vocational, cultural, and political experiences.

Chapter Seven addresses the first research question ‘What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties post Valuing People (VP)?’ through presenting a thematic analysis of the six life stories I have constructed and by analysing statistical information from case files of 200 employees with learning difficulties.

Chapter Eight addresses the second research question ‘How are people with learning difficulties experienced and perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces?’ through a thematic analysis of the experiences and perspectives of 12 employers working with people with learning difficulties in mainstream workplaces.

Chapter Nine addresses the third research question ‘How do supported employment providers (SEPs) promote ‘meaningful work’ opportunities for people with learning difficulties? through a thematic analysis of the views and experiences of the eight SEPs.

Chapter Ten addresses the fourth research question ‘How can the findings from this thesis contribute to the promotion of the participation of people with learning difficulties in Iranian society?’ through discussing the findings of the first, second and the third research questions and making recommendations to influence policy making, service provision and practice for people with learning difficulties in Iran. This chapter also presents recommendations to improve service provision and practice in England. It suggests fields for further research and the common threads.

CHAPTER TWO: My personal experiences

Introduction

One of the main reasons for doing any kind of research, particularly multi approach research is the personal interests of the researcher and concerns about the subject of the research (Bassey, 1999). In this chapter I will explore my personal experiences with disabled people in Iran. It is because of these experiences that I decided to undertake studies in England. I will also present some general information about Iran.

General information about Iran

Known as Persia until 1935, Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979 after the ruling Shah was forced into exile. Located in the Middle East, Iran is the sixteenth largest country in the world. It is surrounded by the Caspian Sea to the north, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey to the northwest, Turkmenistan to the northeast, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the east, Iraq to the west and the Oman Sea and Persian Gulf to the south. Iran has a total area of 1, 648, 195 square kilometre and consists of a rugged, mountainous rim, high central basin with deserts, mountains, and small discontinuous plains along both coasts. The climate in Iran ranges from as high as 55 centigrade in the summer in the southern part of the country to as low as –20 centigrade in some areas in the northeast and northwest during the winter. The west of Iran is cold and the east is arid and cold. Iran is mostly semiarid except along the Caspian coast.



Iran has sixty eight million, seventeen thousand, eight hundred and sixty (68. 017. 860) (July 2005 est.) inhabitants (34 million female; 34.8 million male). More than 55% of the population live in the cities and many live in large cities such as Tehran, the capital, Isfahan, and Mashhad. In Iran, the first official language is Persian or Farsi. However, the first language for many people is Turkish, Arabic, Lorish and Balochish. In addition, in Iran, the national religion is Islam and about 99 percent of the population is Muslim (Shi'a Muslim 89%, and Sunni Muslim 10%), and one percent is Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian.

After a long revolutionary movement led by the late Imam Khomeini, Iran was transformed from a monarchy to an Islamic republic in 1979. This historic event brought great changes in the life patterns of the Iranian people.

The goals and objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Understanding the nature, the ideological and philosophical foundation and value system of the government and its attitude toward its people in general, and towards disabled people in particular, is very important. A realistic criterion for its people's level of expectation derives from an accurate comprehension of the ultimate goals, objectives, and social commitments of

the government. The Islamic Republic is a system of government based on faith: the unity of God is Allah.

According to the Iranian Constitution (1980), the principles of equality and social justice are the main goals of Islam. Therefore, the Iranian government aims to improve and raise the standard of living of its citizens by

- 1) Creating a favourable environment for the growth of spiritual virtues based on faith and piety, and struggle against all forms of vice and corruption.
- 2) Raising the level of public awareness in all areas, using the public press and the mass media, and any other means for the diffusion of ideas.
- 3) Providing free education and physical training for everyone at all levels, and facilitating and expanding higher education.
- 4) Providing a just and independent economic foundation to prepare the welfare of all citizens, eradicating poverty and eliminating deprivation in food, housing, health, and jobs, and providing social insurance.
- 5) Self-sufficiency in all areas, asserting the comprehensive rights of the individual, and strengthening Islamic fraternity and public cooperation among all the people.
- 6) Eliminating all inequality in order to bring about reasonable possibilities for everyone to obtain satisfaction in all material and spiritual areas.
- 7) Creating a sound administrative system in order to offer better social services to the people of Iran.

The ruling powers in Iran rely on the above mentioned goals. The executive branch, the legislature, and the judiciary all operate under the direction and guidance of the supreme leader of the Republic (Vali-e-Faghie).

Cultural Norms and Values: Religion has always played a significant part in the cultural life of Iran. Despite the conceptual distinction, culture and religion are mixed and very much interrelated in Iran. Iranian cultural life has been strongly influenced by Islamic culture and heritage. According to Afrooz (1988), family ties and loyalty are very significant in Iran. Iranian people pay great attention to and respect family solidarity and women's position in the family and the society. Family solidarity also means that everyone in the extended family supports and respectfully obeys an influential individual throughout his or her entire lifetime. In addition Afrooz (1988) indicated that

the Iranian men feel obligated to protect the honour of the family's women and children. It is the duty of men to support economically, socially and psychologically all family members. Moreover, according to the tenth principle of the Iranian Constitution (1980), 'The family is a fundamental unit of Islamic society. All pertinent laws and regulations, and planning shall aim at facilitating family formation, safeguarding the sanctity of the family institution and strengthening family relationships on the basis of Islamic laws and ethics'.

Islam brings with it a sense of social responsibility, evident in such things as *zakat* and *ushr*—forms of charity to those who have less. Supporting disadvantaged people, which includes disabled people, is a religious and charitable duty through which the giver accrues credit for the future (Coleridge, 1999: 155). In this regard, the Islamic revolution in Iran significantly affected services for disabled people. Following the 1979 Islamic revolution, some significant changes took place in special education programmes. Many experts with special educational background returned to Iran from abroad. Many new special schools were established, many special teachers graduated from the Teacher Training Centres, and parent-teacher associations were formed. Many parents who were university graduates and who had some awareness of the ability of their disabled children were demanding more special education facilities from the Educational authorities for their children.

Currently, the Iranian Organisation of Special Education together with the Iranian Welfare Organisation is responsible for providing special educational facilities for all disabled people in Iran. One of the main aims of the Iranian government based on the Iranian Constitution (1980) is 'the provision of independent economic foundation to prepare the welfare of all citizens, eradicating poverty and eliminating deprivation in food, housing, health, and jobs, and providing social insurance'. This has not been realised for disabled people, particularly for those with learning difficulties. In this chapter I will explore my personal experience to show some aspects of exclusion of disabled people in Iranian society.

My Personal Experience

In this section, I will explore personal experiences in Iran which led me to pose research questions one, two and four in this study. These experiences will be divided into the following sections:

1. My teaching experience
2. My experience as a vocational rehabilitation director in the Janbazan Organisation
3. My experience as a rehabilitation director in the Isfahan Welfare Organisation and membership of associations of disabled people

One day, a mother of a child with learning difficulties came to visit me in the IPWO. She was very distressed about her son and was asking for help. She told me “I have three children (two sons and a daughter). One of the sons has intellectual disability and he is 20 years old. When he was 11 years old, I lost my job and I had to stay at home to care for him. When he was a child, I had little difficulty with him because he went to the special school and he was busy with his education in the school. Then, four years ago, my problems started when he finished his education in the primary school. There was no placement for his further education. I had to stay at home with him all the time and I could not go outside even for a few minutes. After many years, my problems are still to be solved and I have a hard and boring life. When his brother and his sister are at home, they shout and beat him. As a result we don’t get along very well. I want to go shopping with him but I cannot because when we go to the store together for shopping or to the park, everybody points at us and sometimes they laugh at us. I do not have any chance to relax in my life. I need to rest but I cannot”.

She added, “There are many facilities for spending leisure time for non-disabled people but there is not any public or private facility for my son to spend time without any difficulty. All his life is spare time but there is no chance to spend even half an hour of his life in the community”. She felt that it was not her fault and she was wondering why God had given her a disabled son as she had led a blameless life. She said that she had not had a happy time in her life and she thought that she was an unlucky woman. She said “Right now, my disabled son is growing up and I cannot control him in my house because he is a very strong person, and hyperactive. I am very worried, particularly when I am alone with him at home.”

She added that when her son was young, it had been easier to be with him at home, as she had kept him in the room with his toys and closed the door, but at present, she cannot and she is unable to do anything. Sometimes he beats her and she is confused about what she should do. She added that sometimes, she wants to kill herself but she feels guilty. When I asked her why she had not found a workplace to accept her son, she said that there was nothing for her son to do in the community. At school, he learnt some skills related to reading, writing and counting but the programme in the school had not helped him find a job. She added that she had been to the Welfare Organisation many times to try to refer her son to a placement to provide vocational training and other desirable skills but

they said that they did not have any such provision. In addition, most placements that are available are related to non-disabled people in the community. I said to her that I thought her son was capable of doing many jobs but we had to believe in him. He could learn some simple jobs. He could work very well in some tasks, particularly carpet weaving, horticulture and agricultural work. In addition, he might be able to become a good farmer, labourer, or shop assistant. She agreed but thought that people did not believe that he was able to work. She had asked some to find a job for her child but they had laughed and rejected him many times because of his 'learning difficulties'.

She said that when she had looked for information regarding employment opportunities for her son, she had been told that many non-disabled people were out of work and she should be ashamed that she was looking for a job for someone with a learning difficulty. She felt hopeless about the future. When I asked her where her husband was and why she was looking after her son alone, she responded that her husband was a labourer in a factory and he did not accept any responsibility for his son. She added, "When he comes back home, he does not pay any attention to his son. He always says that it is her fault that our God has given them a disabled son and he does not like his son much".

In above story, meeting this woman was a significant experience in that it highlighted the reality of the negative attitudes of people towards people with learning difficulties in Iranian society. Most disabled people's families were worried about the future of their children. They were looking for suitable programmes first to educate them and then in adulthood, to secure a safe employment placement and good quality of life in the community. Based on the 2004 Iranian Legislation of Disabled People's Rights (ILDPR) (see Appendix Six), all the public and governmental organisations must provide adequate services for disabled people to support them in gaining their rights in the same way as non-disabled people. However, in the community most non-disabled people do not recognise the social rights of disabled people. Stone (1999) stated that people should stop pitying disabled people as victims and should uphold their rights as citizens.

If people believed that a disabled person was a citizen, they would support and afford them rights to education and employment in society. In the above case we were, a few months later able to overcome the problem by finding a part-time cleaning assistant job with no wage (only bus fare) for the lady's son. The IPWO also gave financial support to the mother to weave rugs at home. However, there were many other cases like that. Parents had very hard lives and needed a lot of support from the community to cope with their disabled children. But, most families were reluctant to talk about their problems because they felt if they did, there would not be any helpful response for them in society.

1. My Teaching Experience

Before I came to England to undertake the current research, I had ten years teaching experience in Iran. This included six years teaching undergraduate students in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Isfahan in the field of special education; three years teaching children and adults with moderate and mild learning difficulties in a special school and one year teaching pupils with hearing impairment in a separate special school.

When I was teaching pupils with moderate and mild learning difficulties, I realised that there were many issues around their education and employment. The curriculum was not adequate. Before 1994, the content of the curriculum for people with learning difficulties was the same as for the non-disabled pupils in many aspects. It only focused on teaching literacy and numeracy, and there were no social and vocational training skills. Since 1996 the Iranian Special Educational Organisation has been planning to add a vocational training programme to the curriculum. However, this plan has recently been abandoned due to lack of funds. There are not enough vocational training programmes for pupils with learning difficulties, and after leaving special schools, they are unable to get jobs. According to Principle Thirty of the Iranian Constitution (1980), the government must provide the means for free education (including special education) for all people until the completion of secondary school (age 17-18). In addition, according to IL DPR (2004) Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MHME) and, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) must provide free educational services to enable disabled people to access higher education. However, with the exception of people with learning difficulties, most disabled pupils have free education up to higher education. People with learning difficulties are excluded from higher education and only benefit from study in special primary schools because there is an assumption that they would not be able to continue their education further. Therefore, after leaving special primary schools, most of them stay at home.

There are many socio-cultural and structural barriers which marginalise people with learning difficulties from both mainstream and special education. Perhaps, they are marginalised because of the negative attitudes of most non-disabled people towards them. Society views people with learning difficulties as 'unable' people. Even the perceptions of some parents and families are very negative. Consequently, they are less likely to invest in education for their disabled children, particularly if they are poor. Therefore, many disabled children live below the poverty line.

While I was teaching at school, many questions confronted me. Why were most people with learning difficulties marginalised in society? Were they regarded as citizens? If they were, why weren't they accorded the full range of rights that other citizens enjoyed? Were there any job opportunities for people with learning difficulties in other countries? Did people with learning difficulties face the same problems all over the world?

These questions led me to work with war-disabled people in the Janbazan Organisation.

2. My experience as a rehabilitation director in the Janbazan Organisation

When I got my BA degree in the field of special education from Isfahan University in 1988, I started work in the Isfahan Province Janbazan Organisation (IPJO) as the Rehabilitation Director. The Janbazan Organisation is responsible for the welfare of and provides education and rehabilitative services for war-disabled people in Iran. Before the Iran/Iraq war, there was no such provision in Iran, and a few years after the war started, the Iranian leader at that time (Ayatollah Khomeini) established the organisation for war-disabled people in 1982. War-disabled people in Iran are referred to as "living martyrs" or "Janbaz"¹, hence the name of the Janbazan Organisation. I was interested in working with the IPJO because a few friends of mine were physically and visually impaired in the war and also because it was related to my special interest. These people had a lot of difficulties relating to their families, and their social, educational and vocational activities. Before they became disabled, most of them had family, a job, and a good social and economical position in the community. However, after becoming impaired, most of them were unable to continue their previous jobs and needed support to improve their skills to get another job.

The IPJO was a new organisation and in the first few weeks of my working there some difficulties became apparent: particularly a lack of an organisational framework and sufficient staff. A suitable framework was established and more staff were employed to enable war-disabled people to be appropriately employed, we needed a lot of information about their qualifications and background; the sorts of employment opportunities available to them; barriers to their employment and so on. To obtain this

¹ Martyrdom in holy defence and for the sake of believing in God's works has the highest value in Islamic faith. In addition, Janbaz does mean 'War-Veteran'.

information we needed a national programme and, at the time, such did not exist. Therefore, the employment services the IPJO could offer were inadequate. Whatever services were available were for those who were sufficiently proactive to seek help. When I started my work, I tried to provide a suitable programme in the IPJO and with the support of the staff I was able to do a lot of work in obtaining the necessary information. My responsibility was limited to the war-disabled and I was able to offer them employment support. I provided, for example, training, assistance finding jobs, support at work and financial resources for disabled people who were self-employed. These types of support were very helpful but were not enough and we needed a national programme to overcome the employment barriers for war-disabled people.

One year later, I moved to Tehran, the capital of Iran, to start my MA studies in the field of 'special educational needs' in the department of educational studies at Tehran University. I continued working with war-disabled people and one day, one of my friends who was the manager of the employment department in the IJO offered me a job to co-operate with him. I accepted his offer and I became the vocational rehabilitation director of the IJO. In the first few years after the Iraq/Iran war, we did not have many vocational opportunities for those disabled in the war and we had to prepare a lot of employment opportunities through vocational training, and the provision of supported employment. We started our work in the IJO with next to nothing. Therefore, working there was a fantastic opportunity for me to implement some of the theory that I had acquired at University to help overcome barriers for war-disabled people.

To this end, the first urgent action was to review what these barriers were. We formed a vocational rehabilitation team in the IJO. The members of the vocational rehabilitation team in the IJO included academic staff from Tehran University and professionals from the Iranian Welfare Organisation and the Iranian Ministry of Labour.

War-disabled people hold very high prestige and have great respect and honour in society. Their acceptance in the community was greater than that of non war-disabled people. Their honourable position in society has had a considerable effect on the thinking and lifestyle of other disabled people and people's attitudes toward them. Before the Iran/Iraq war the attitude of most non-disabled people towards disabled people was negative but afterwards, the attitude became a little more positive (IJO, 1992). In recent years, in such a warm and enthusiastic atmosphere, many disabled people (both war and others) have been socially very active, taking part in various

aspects of society and participating in different special national and international sports and tournaments and championship games.

Regarding the employment of war-disabled people, some non-disabled people in society thought that war-disabled people should not work and should receive benefits instead. However, in the Janbazan Organisation, we believed that all disabled people should have work and our efforts in providing employment opportunities were based on the old saying 'Give a man a fishing rod and he will feed himself for life; give him a fish and he will be hungry again tomorrow' (in Hurst, 1999: 27). So, to provide adequate employment services for war-disabled people, we needed to change the negative attitudes. In addition, we had to review employment opportunities. We were eager to initiate some employment legislation. To enable us to identify employment barriers the vocational rehabilitation team from the IJO decided to do some research. We selected four hundred war-disabled people from various cities in Iran and interviewed them in Tehran using semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires. This study revealed many employment barriers for war-disabled people, such as illiteracy, lack of financial support, employers' attitude, not enough suitable equipment, lack of qualifications, a lack of employment legislation, and being disabled (IJO, 1992). Although there was some existing employment legislation for non war-disabled people it was ineffective. For example, all public and governmental organisations had an obligation to ensure that at least 3 percent of their workforces were disabled people (IWO, 1996, IL DPR, 2004). But, this was not enforced and has not happened.

The IJO provided many national vocational rehabilitation programmes for war-disabled people. To overcome employment problems and to give good vocational rehabilitative services in each province, we provided a new framework through the Vocational Rehabilitation Team. The framework that we established was called the Vocational Guidance and Counselling Service Centre in each Janbazan Organisation. At each centre we employed many professionals in special education, psychology, counselling and social work field. Moreover, we provided courses to improve the knowledge and understanding of all staff.

During the period of my work in the IJO (from 1989 to 1992), we were able to provide many varied employment opportunities for war-disabled people, particularly in agriculture, industry, and craftwork. Some people got business licences, loans without interest, and discounts to allow them to obtain materials and equipment to establish factories. For example, one person who was living in a northern Iranian city became

paraplegic during the war. He therefore, could not continue his work in construction field. He was unemployed for a few years and when he came to the IJO for help, we evaluated his interest and employment background. We realised that he had qualifications and some work experiences in making knives and scissors in a factory. He was interested in getting a job in that factory but the work environment was inaccessible for wheelchair users. In addition, the employer of that factory had informed our client that there were no vacancies. With the support of the ministry of Commerce, the man got a business licence and loan with very low interest to provide adequate equipment for running a small factory employing 10 people. During the first few months that the factory was operating there were some difficulties which we were able to support him through. For example, he had difficulty selling his products. With the assistance of the IJO, he was able to sell his products and was successful in running his factory.

The above case was one of thousands in which the IJO was able to provide suitable job opportunities for war-disabled people. Most of the government and non-governmental organisations had a very good level of co-operation with us in the Janbazan Organisation. Financially, we did not have any restriction in employing specialists who provided supported employment for war-disabled people. Moreover, most restrictions on employment opportunities for war-disabled people affected the uneducated and illiterate. Those with qualifications had many good job opportunities in the community and had fewer problems.

Whilst I was working in the IJO, I was a member of the Vocational Rehabilitation Project, which was under the supervision and responsibility of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). I was the representative of the IJO on that project for three years. The main aim of that project was to overcome employment barriers through the provision of training, support staff, and special equipment needed for disabled people in the workplace, and a sample factory for disabled people like Remploy in England was established.

Throughout that time I had many meetings with project members, particularly with the vocational rehabilitation director of the Iranian Welfare Organisation. I heard from him that there were many unemployed disabled people, and there were no employment opportunities for them, particularly individuals with learning difficulties. I wanted to know why. I wanted to help them solve their problems because at that time I was also involved with some parents of children with learning difficulties. They came to see me

as a professional and talked to me about their problems. Many of them had given up their jobs to care for their disabled children because there was no service for them in the community and they had to stay at home and care for them.

On that project I communicated with the ILO's representative, who was British. He told me about employment opportunities for disabled people, particularly people with learning difficulties in the UK. That motivated me to come to the UK. For example, I got some information about Remploy where many disabled people, including those with learning difficulties are employed. I wanted more information with a view to developing a suitable framework for improving the education and employment services for adults with learning difficulties in Iran.

3. My experience as a Rehabilitation Director in the IPWO and membership of association of disabled people

Before writing about my experience in the Welfare Organisation, I think it is essential to note that supporting disabled people has a long and distinguished history in Iran. As Wirz and Hartley (1999: 90) asserted, disability services in developing countries 'often arose from charitable motivation related to indigenous religious or philanthropic organisation'. In Iran, traditionally, religious orders and charitable organisations have given comprehensive help to disabled people. In Islamic societies like Iran, religious people have very positive and protective attitudes toward disabled people. Caring for disabled people and supporting them, particularly people with multiple disabilities, is considered a blessing of God. Motahhari (1981) reported that the holy Koran declares that if any one saved [revived] a life, it would be as if he/she saved the life of the whole people. Therefore, active involvement in a voluntary organisation with the aim of helping disabled people is believed to be a social honour. In addition, according to Tabatabaie (1968), it is an obligatory religious duty for every Muslim to do his or her best in meeting the needs of the disabled person. In this regard, in the Islamic Republic of Iran the main responsibility of the government toward disabled people is to protect and provide comprehensive help and facilities for them. Therefore, in providing education and rehabilitative services for all disabled people in Iran, the government established two organisations: the Special Needs Education Organisation and the Welfare Organisation. The Welfare Organisation, is an independent organisation of the

MoW, and is the main organisation responsible for welfare and rehabilitation services for disabled people.

Working in the IPWO offered a great opportunity to meet a large number of disabled people and to become involved with their various problems. Based on my knowledge and experience as a member of the Vocational Rehabilitation Project I wanted to work with non-war disabled people, particularly people with learning difficulties regarding their employment. I had some ideas in my mind, but I had not had the chance to put them into practice. So, working in the IPWO as a rehabilitation director was an excellent opportunity. It was a post which empowered me to help disabled people develop their facilities in the community. It however, offered only limited opportunities. My responsibility was only for disabled people who were living in Isfahan province. Based on my experience in the IJO, I knew that there were many ways to solve the employment problems of disabled people in Iran as a whole. I passed my ideas and some experiences to other responsible personnel in the IWO, but they did not pay attention. I was therefore looking for a position with wider and greater power.

Whilst I was a lecturer at the department of Education and Psychology at Isfahan University, I became the Rehabilitation Director of the Isfahan Province Welfare Organisation. It was a good opportunity to obtain more information about the Welfare Organisation; to get to learn about the personnel, equipment, programmes which were implemented in that organisation, its responsibilities for providing education and rehabilitative services for disabled people, and its limitations. In addition, working in the IPWO was a good opportunity to make a link between the academic staff and students at Isfahan University and the Welfare Organisation in order to carry out practical programmes.

When I started to work with the IPWO, I found extensive difficulties. There was no accurate statistical information regarding the population of disabled people. There were approximately 50, 000 disabled people who had applied to the Organisation, but the real population of disabled people was more than 100, 000. The IPWO (2005) reported that based on International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH2), there are approximately 430 000 disabled people in Isfahan province. Out of these, 120 000 needed rehabilitative services, but only 50 000 used them. More than fifty percent of that population are living in rural areas in poverty, jobless, illiterate, incomeless, unmarried, and with insufficient rehabilitative services. While I worked in the IPWO, the Welfare Organisation had some projects such as Community Based

Rehabilitation (CBR) in some rural areas to improve the quality of life by providing some suitable services for disabled people, but it was insufficient.

According to the IPWO (2005), out of 120 000 disabled people who need the rehabilitative services, fifteen percent receive benefits. These are mainly people with severe disabilities. Most of the disabled people who received the benefits and the rehabilitative services live in urban areas where they could access the Welfare Organisation easily and all the rehabilitative centres are established in the big cities. Therefore, disabled people in urban areas have greater access to facilities than disabled people who live in rural areas. According to Jones (1999), the most pressing issue for disabled people who live in developing countries, particularly those who live in rural areas, is still how to get access to any kind of services at all. Stone (1999: 175) explained her personal experience with China's disabled people, 'A large number of medical and rehabilitation professionals were consulted in the local areas and families of disabled children always have long journeys to access medical and rehabilitation services'.

Frost (2000: 10) asserted that 'Vocational training and employment opportunities are limited for disabled people and consequently they have less potential to secure a livelihood for themselves.' One of the main problems of disabled people, particularly people with learning difficulties in Iran is unemployment. As is mentioned in Chapter one, most disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties have been unemployed for many years and the unemployment rates are high. The unemployment rate for women is higher than for men. This is not only for a lack of employment opportunities, but also because many parents, particularly those who live in rural areas, prevent their daughters from going out to work.

The most important duties of the IWO are providing vocational training, assisting in offering vocational and employment placements, and drawing up the required regulations for preserving the rights of disabled people (ILDPR, 2004). According to the Welfare Organisation (1996), ninety percent of disabled people in Iran need to access vocational rehabilitative services but only 10-15 percent of them do so. As is mentioned above, according to the ILDPR (2004) all public and governmental organisation have an obligation to ensure that at least 3 percent of their workforce are disabled people. In addition, these organisations have an extra obligation to ensure that at least 60 per cent of operator jobs must be from blind people and people with physical

impairment and 60 percent of secretaries and typists must be from people with physical impairment (ILDPR, 2004).

The Iranian Welfare Organisation has established more than 600 segregated private, charity and voluntary organisations to provide vocational training for disabled people. Out of these, 197 centres are for people with learning difficulties (IWO, 2003). Most disabled people who are unemployed (except people with learning difficulties), attend various vocational training courses successfully in segregated and mainstream centres, but they cannot find permanent jobs and are still out of work. The Welfare Organisation has been trying to find them suitable jobs after training but it has not been successful because of a lack of job opportunities and the negative attitudes of non-disabled people towards disabled people.

Theoretically speaking, everyone in the community has a right to employment and education. However, in spite of considerable investment by the Iranian government in both areas, disabled people's fundamental right to be treated as equal is still denied by society. Disabled people are perceived as 'unable to work' as a result of their individual impairment. Despite increasing disability awareness of people in the last three decades, the attitudes of most people toward disabled people is still negative. People who live in rural areas use negative labels such as 'handicapped', 'cripple' and 'mad'. Even families who have disabled children, particularly those who live in rural areas, think that disability is 'a curse and is linked to negative mythology' (Frost, 2000: 8). When I became the rehabilitation director in the Welfare Organisation, I visited a few families of disabled people who lived in rural areas and who cared for their children with learning difficulties at home. They were caring for their disabled children poorly. This is my experience of visiting one family:

When I arrived there, I saw their son with learning difficulties in chains in the yard. This visit was in summer, so it was warm and a lot of flies covered the face and body of the disabled child. I became angry and I asked his parents why they kept their son in chains; why they ill treated their child like that, and; why so many flies were covering his face and body. I also asked if they thought he was human. If so, why was he being kept like an animal? Unfortunately, the parents were completely misguided about their child. They said they believed that he was 'stupid' and 'mad' because he was 22 years old but he could not talk and he was unable to eat, learn, or care for himself. They also said that if they removed the chains, he would go outside and hurt himself and other people who lived in this area. I was puzzled by this incident because the Welfare Organisation gave SDA benefits to this family but never checked the quantity and quality of service for disabled children who were being cared for by their families at home.

Based on my personal experience I found that some groups of disabled people are more acceptable than others in the community. For example, people with physical impairment are more acceptable than the visually and hearing impaired, who in turn are more acceptable than individuals with learning difficulties.

There are many jobs which disabled people, particularly people with learning difficulties, are able to carry out successfully, but unfortunately they do not have access to them. This is because of negative attitude of people towards disabled people. Having a low awareness of disability and not believing in equal rights for people with learning difficulties is not only the problem of ordinary people; even some service providers in the Welfare Organisation, do not see people with learning difficulties as a 'capable' group of people able to do many tasks. For example, when working in the IPWO, I found many suitable vacancies in that organisation for people with learning difficulties, such as working in the kitchen, warehouse, garden, and as porters. However, all jobs were offered to non-disabled people rather than to disabled people because service providers believed that non-disabled people were better. For example, one day, I heard that the recruitment department in the IPWO wanted to employ some people to work in the warehouse and cleaning department. I knew one person with learning difficulty who was suitable for those vacancies. I referred that person to the recruitment department to apply for one of those jobs. Later I heard that they had been rejected by the recruitment department. I spoke with the dean of the recruitment department to find out why. He said that for those vacancies there were many non-disabled applicants and there was no place for people with learning difficulties in those circumstances. I had a long conversation with the dean of the recruitment department about the right of people with learning difficulties to get jobs. I wanted to encourage him to accept the application of a person with learning difficulties based on legislation which required employers to ensure that at least 3% of their workforce were disabled. He just started laughing at me and said, 'Mr Norouzi, there are many non-disabled people applicants who have applied for jobs and you want me to employ a person with learning difficulty who cannot do the job'.

One of the important duties of the IPWO is providing adequate job opportunities and encouraging employers in other organisations to employ disabled people. However, in the above case, the organisation which is responsible for ensuring that other organisations employ a workforce comprising of at least 3% disabled people, itself

discriminated against applicants with learning difficulties. How could it then expect other employers to employ people with learning difficulties?

In addition, while I was doing tutorials at Isfahan University my students and my University colleagues passed to me a lot of information about the abuse of disabled people in the community. Moreover, I got information about employment barriers and other issues from disabled people, whom I met at various associations. Whilst I worked at the Welfare Organisation, supporting disabled people and their families, we established four associations for disabled people. Three were for those with visual, auditory and physical impairment and one was for parents of people with learning difficulties. The IPWO has established these associations to provide the suitable environment for disabled people to realise their rights and full potential to try to be independent.

In addition, the IPWO believed that if disabled people participated in discussion of issues such as employment, transport, housing, sports, and social activity in the community, their suggestions would be helpful and useful in developing services. Before my work in the IPWO, there was no association for disabled people, but while I was there, many disabled people requested the right to participate in planning and policy about their lives. The slogan of most disabled was 'NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US' (VP, 2001; Barton, 2004: 287). To break down barriers that prevented disabled people's participation in society, we decided to involve them in contributing more to develop and to increase their self-esteem and self-confidence through their involvement in four associations. With the help of these associations, we held a national academic conference in Isfahan on the Universal Day of Disabled People in 1998. More than a thousand disabled people and their families attended the two-day conference called, 'Society, Disabled People, and those with Duty in the Community.' They discussed some issues around unemployment, employment barriers, ways of overcoming the barriers, employment opportunities, and the duties of the service providers and policy makers. They stated that the unemployment affected their social life and they wanted to change their social situation in the community. In addition, the parents of people with learning difficulties were worried about their children's future. When Stone (1999: 175) reported her personal experience with disabled people in China, she stated that 'Parents revealed a high degree of care, commitment and concern for their child, irrespective of social or economic status'. This reflects my personal experience. Parents of children with learning difficulties were particularly concerned

about their disabled children because after leaving special primary school they had nothing to do in their adulthood. Their parents were very worried about their situation in the community and they cried when I met them in different places. They told us that when they died they did not know what would happen to their children as no one, including siblings, liked people with learning difficulties.

As I mentioned before, in Iran, the attitudes of religious people in the community toward people with learning difficulties are positive. Tabatabaie (1968) reported that the prophet Muhammad said that serving disabled people was like being in the service of the prophets of God. Therefore, for religious people it is a great honour and blessing of God to be in the service of the disabled and to be actively involved in charitable organisations. They are even given much financial support through some charities and voluntary organisations. They have a sense of responsibility to help and support people with learning difficulties because the holy Koran encourages people to do so, and the sayings of the prophet Muhammad call for much sympathy, affection, and social individual recognition and treatment of disabled people. However, if they needed employees in their workplaces, they would not be interested in employing people with learning difficulties because some of them viewed them as 'unable' to work because of their individual impairment.

For example, when I was working in the IPWO, there was a religious family who established a two million pound (£2, 000, 000) boarding centre for a group of disabled people. He was a factory owner and could have employed some disabled people but he did not. That person said, 'If you need equipment to buy for disabled people, I would be very grateful to provide for them but do not wish me to employ any disabled person because I am too busy for my business and I do not want to take any direct responsibility for any disabled people employees because they are vulnerable in society.'

Stone's experience (1999), my own experience and the slogan of all disabled people agree that to solve the problem particularly for overcoming the employment barriers, it is: 'RIGHTS NOT CHARITY'. The right of disabled people to employment has been emphasised by the ILDPR (2004). However, society needs to accept disabled people as fully human 'no matter how they were born or how they turn out to be' as Bank-Mikkelsen (1980: 57) argues. Fortunately, in the final year of working in the IPWO, we were able to provide considerable support regarding employment for people with learning difficulties through increasing the awareness of non-disabled people about the ability of people with learning difficulties to work. Several voluntary and private

workshops and some training centres were established for people with learning difficulties. In addition, we decided to address the employment problem by talking with disabled people and their families and establishing many small companies with the contribution and the cooperation of the Disabled People's Associations in the community. These companies were involved in carpet and rug weaving, dressmaking, horticulture, packing fruit, and baking. They employed more than one hundred people with hearing, visual, or physical disabilities. However, we were only able to establish two small horticulture and weaving companies for seven people with learning difficulties and that was with the help of parents. I would like to report one of the successful experiences with a family who had four people with learning difficulties as follows:

One day a 55 year old man came to my office. He was physically impaired and he asked for some financial help because he was unemployed. He said that he had to feed eight children in the big family (four of eight children had learning difficulties). When talking with him, I realised that he had some experience in weaving cloth. I asked him why he was unemployed with so many years experience as a qualified cloth weaver. He said that he had been employed in a factory for ten years and he lost his job because he was physically disabled. He added that the main reason for losing his job was because, as a result of his disability he had difficulty in accessing the transport to go to work and consequently was late. This reason was not really important enough to lose his job, but his employer dismissed him. He explained that he had been unemployed for a few years and he could not find a suitable job.

In our conversation, he mentioned that if he had some equipment, he would be able to be self-employed and work with his disabled children as well. I took note of what he said and asked him to give more details about his ability to be self-employed. So he invited me to go to his home and talked more about his interest. When I went to his house, I met his four disabled children. Two had Down's syndrome. Three were over 16 years old and were able to work but were out of work as well. That man said that if we supported him, he would be able to end his and his sons' unemployment. He mentioned that he would be able to educate his disabled children and give them some vocational training. The support that he wanted was some materials and equipment, which were basic in weaving cloth. Therefore, we gave him some financial help and a loan without interest. We also provided him with cheap and suitable equipment and materials. Four months from our first meeting, with the support of the Isfahan Welfare Organisation, he established a small family company weaving cloth at his house. He started his work with his wife, four disabled children and his non-disabled son in producing cloth. He was very happy in this new situation because after a few months' effort he and his disabled children were employed. A video film was made and shown on the TV and Isfahan news three times. Five months later, he had many offers of contracts and obtained advances of capital. He was able to complete all his orders. A year later, he extended his company and added another machine to his factory. They did not demand any support from the Welfare Organisation after starting work, and were even able to support other people. They were able to repay their loan and they improved the quality of their lives in the community. In addition,

when we wanted to show people with learning difficulties' abilities to employers, we showed his disabled children who were working in that company.

In the above story the man stated that he had lost his first job in a factory because his manager did not like him. I experienced many similar incidents. Many questions confronted me. Why did employers not like to employ disabled people? Did disabled employees in other countries have the same experiences as disabled people in Iran? What were the employers' experiences and perspectives regarding disabled employees in other countries? How were disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties, experienced and perceived by their employers in other countries?

One part of my experience in the IPWO was as a manager of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme in Isfahan province whilst I was rehabilitation director. As I mentioned before, there was a lack of information and problems of access to services and employment. The CBR was designed to overcome these problems, and to improve the quality of life for disabled people. Creating a positive attitude towards disabled people, providing rehabilitation services, education and training opportunities, care facilities, and the prevention of the causes of disabilities were other results of the implementation of the CBR programme in a village in Isfahan province. During the implementation of the CBR 58 disabled people were identified by the CBR workers. I met some of them in the village where they lived. Then, we provided support services for them to overcome their problems. For example, one of the persons that we recognised through the CBR was a man with physical impairment. This is his story.

A man was 45 year old and had paraplegia through an incident in the village. He fell from the roof of his house. His family took him to the hospital in Isfahan and he was in hospital many days for medical treatment. But the treatment was not sufficient and he became physically impaired. When he realised his predicament, he requested his family take him home. He stayed at home for two years. His family did not know anything about his disability and how he should be treated. He became depressed and would shout at his wife and children without any reason. In addition, he had no hope and was wishing his death from God. He was saying to his family that he was unable to continue his life in that situation. He had three children and he lost his job. Before he became disabled, he was self-employed and he was working on the farm. Now, he did not have any income, his family owed a lot of money and they were living a hard life. The physical environment of his home was unsuitable and he did not have any exercise. In addition, he did not go out for two years and he was getting bedsores and skin problems on his buttocks as well because of a lack of mobility. Moreover, he became fat and it was difficult for him to move around. He was dependent on his family in meeting his basic needs, even going to the toilet. Emotionally, his family loved him but the children were not interested in living with their dad any more because he was shouting without any reason and demanding things when he needed nothing. In addition, the social environment at home was not good and the

relationship of that disabled man with his wife and children became cool. When we found out about him through the CBR programme in the village, we had a few meetings with him and his family, and gave them some basic information to increase their awareness about paraplegia and how they could help their father to have increased mobility at home and how they should encourage him to do something for himself. Moreover, we provided him with a wheelchair so he could go out and interact with other people in the community. Some physiotherapy services were given to him at home, and also his family was trained to help him do some simple exercise to prevent his legs from atrophying. To overcome his financial problems, the IPWO first gave him a monthly allowance; secondly, it provided for his wife with some equipment and materials for weaving carpets and rugs. Through the CBR programme, that disabled person received some psychological services to reduce the stress of the members of his family and to make a good, acceptable, and warm relationship for all members of the family.

Conclusion

In order to overcome the employment problems for disabled people in Iran, particularly for people with learning difficulties, we needed to recognise the major barriers and identify suitable employment opportunities. While I worked in the IJO, IPJO, IPWO, and Isfahan University, I found many disabled people, particularly people with learning difficulties, who were unemployed. At that time, many factors affected the employment of disabled people. These included:

- The low expectations of people with learning difficulties of themselves and by others
- A lack of vocational training and qualification skills as a result of inadequate education whether in mainstream or special education.
- A lack of financial support to disabled people for vocational training and employment. Only 10-15 percent of the population of disabled people received benefit from the government and there was limited benefit for disabled people who were on vocational training courses
- A lack of powerful employment legislation to support disabled people in getting jobs. There was legislation saying that each employer had to fill three percent of their vacancies with disabled people but this was and is not enforced.
- A lack of desirable employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties in the community.

Consequently, based on my personal experiences and my knowledge regarding the ability of people with learning difficulties, I believe that they are able to work at least in areas such as carpet weaving, horticulture, labouring, and retail work, but they are excluded from having paid employment in mainstream society as a result of several socio-political and cultural barriers within the society; not as a result of their individual impairment. I realised that in overcoming employment barriers for people with learning difficulties in Iran, we needed to recognise suitable employment opportunities and ways of overcoming barriers. We also needed some successful experiences of people with learning difficulties at work to demonstrate their ability to work. These personal experiences in Iran led me to study in England. I wanted to consider the legislation, policies, service provision and practices regarding people with learning difficulties. I also wanted to investigate the realities behind these interventions as experienced by people with learning difficulties, employers and supported employment providers. In this regard, all four research questions are derived (raised) from my personal experiences. The answers to these questions are expected to suggest a suitable framework for improving the education and employment services for adults with learning difficulties in Iran.

CHAPTER THREE: The existing literature on employment of disabled people

Introduction

It has already been noted in Chapter Two that in overcoming employment barriers for people with learning difficulties in Iran we needed to recognise suitable employment opportunities and ways of overcoming barriers. Therefore, in this chapter, I will consider the literature on employment opportunities for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties in the UK. Firstly, I shall outline the value of work for disabled people. Secondly, I will review the history to the employment of disabled people in Britain in general, and those with learning difficulties and women in particular. Thirdly, I shall explore employment and welfare policy, particularly ‘new Labour’s’ employment policy and programmes for disabled people focusing on the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP), and the Supported Employment Programme (SEP). Fourthly, I will discuss the nature of employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties. Finally, the employment barriers and the ways of overcoming barriers for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties, will be considered.

In considering the literature in this chapter, I will review all employment policies, programmes and services to get more information about the employment opportunities in the UK, to outline key points of analysis in relation to literature, to make some recommendations to improve legislation, policies, service provision and practices for people with learning difficulties in Iran.

The value of work for disabled people

One of the most important needs and social rights of people in adulthood in any society is access to work. Work is equated with wage labouring, nothing more or nothing less (Warren, 2005: 301). Work clearly has a very important social role and status within our society (Mitchell, 1999: 766). Beyer et al (2004: 9) have distinguished work from employment and argued that work is usually defined ‘as an activity that involves the exercise of skills and judgement, taking place within set limits prescribed

by others...Work, therefore, is essentially something you 'do' for other people. Here 'employment' is work you get paid for'. In this research I will look at employment for people with learning difficulties.

What is the importance and the value of work? For disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties, work provides money and positive social status; facilitates social inclusion; makes a contribution to other people; and promotes independence, thereby enhancing self esteem. Thus work contributes to social, economic, and psychological well being (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (PMSU), 2005; Roulstone & Barnes, 2005; Beyer et al, 2004; Roulstone, 2004; Schneider & Wistow, 2004; McConkey, 1998; Pierini et al, 2001; Burchardt, 2000; Simons, 1998; Eggleton et al, 1999; Loumidis et al, 2001; Barnes et al, 1999; Grundy et al, 1999; Reid & Bray, 1998; Norouzi, 2004b, 2004c; Smits, 2004; Carr, 2004; Simons & Watson, 1999; O'Bryan et al, 2000). Gosling and Cotterill (2000) argue that many people with learning difficulties wish to have a regular job and value wages. Moreover,

It's better to work than to be unemployed...it's important to work to earn money...I like to work...you need to work for the pennies. (Quoted in Pannell & Simons, 2000: 25)

Goodley and Norouzi (2005) argue that supporting people to work and to contribute to their communities relates to the ways in which society values people with learning difficulties. However, the prospect for creative work and sharing in the fruits of economic progress has long been denied to the majority of people with learning difficulties. The 2001 White Paper, *Valuing People: A new strategy for learning disability for the 21st century*, reported that fewer than 10 % of people with learning difficulties are employed. Therefore, one of the British government's objectives is to enable more people with 'learning disabilities' to participate in all forms of employment, wherever possible in paid work, and to make a valued contribution to the world of work (VP, 2001: 84).

Background to the employment of disabled people in Britain: some recent statistics

Disability is associated with unemployment, poverty and social exclusion in the UK (PMSU, 2005; Stanley, 2005; Lunt, 2005; Heenan, 2002: 383). There is credible evidence to suggest employment opportunities for disabled people are considerably

restricted and most disabled people are excluded from employment (PMSU, 2005; DRC, 2004; Levitan and Taggart, 1977; Schneider et al, 2004; Oliver, 1996; Heenan, 2002; Jolly, 2000; Roulstone et al, 2003; Roulstone, 2002, 2003; Sapey, 2000; Bowe, 1993; Lunt & Thornton, 1997; Jolly, 2000), and over 60 per cent of disabled people live below the poverty line (Barnes, 1991).

There are estimated to be between 8.6 and 11 million disabled people in Britain (PMSU, 2005; Barnes et al, 2002; Berthoud, 1998; Bailey, 2004; DRC, 2004, paragraph 2.3). It is pleasing to note that rates of employment among disabled people have risen in recent years as more and more employers have adopted better employment practices (DRC, 2004). However, it is still the case that only about half of those disabled people who are of working age are actually in employment and many want to work and are capable of doing so (DRC, 2004; Berthoud, 1998; PMSU, 2005).

There is some confusion about the percentage of disabled people who are unemployed. Thirty one percent of working age disabled people are in employment (Roulstone, 2002: 634). The unemployment rates for long-term disabled people are nearly twice as high as those for non-disabled people: 10.5 per cent compared with 5.3 per cent (General Survey, 1998). Disabled people are over six times as likely as non-disabled people to be out of work (Labour Force Survey, 1999). Over three million disabled people are in work and another three million are out of work (PMSU, 2005: 155). One million disabled people are unemployed and would like to work (Bailey, 2004), or wish to access paid work (O'Bryan et al, 2000). However, Burchardt (2000a) noted that a third of disabled people who find jobs are out of work a year later. The 1999 Labour Force Survey reported that people with diabetes, skin conditions and hearing impairment are associated with relatively high employment rates and those with mental illness and learning disabilities have much lower employment rates (PMSU, 2005). One in six people with learning difficulties who were of 'working age' had a paid job (Emerson et al, 2005). Around two thirds of those with learning difficulties are out of work and on state benefits. The quality of their lives is less than satisfactory (Hornby and Kidd, 2001).

The estimated number of people with mild and moderate learning disabilities in the population is 1.2 million; around 650, 000 adults of working age and most of them are unemployed (DoH, 2001). This is not because people with learning difficulties do not want to work. A lot of evidence (Roulstone, 2004; Norouzi, 2003a, 2004c; Pannell & Simons, 2000; Emerson et al, 2005) indicates that people with learning difficulties

would like to work and to get paid employment ‘People want to work even if they are not working at present’ (Beyer et al, 2004: 71).

The poor and low employment rate for people with learning difficulties does not apply to the British society only, but to other societies as well. For example, in the USA, some researchers reported low employment rate for people with ‘mental retardation’ (Wehman, 1996; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). I have noted in Chapter Two that in Iran, more than 97 per cent of people with learning difficulties are unemployed (IPWO, 2005).

Among people with learning difficulties, women are less likely to be employed and their level of wages is low (Blackorby and Wanger, 1996; Norouzi, 2003a; May & Hughes, 1988; Labour Force Survey, 1996; Shearn et al, 2000; Fine & Asch, 1985; Hanna and Rogovsky, 1991; Pfeiffer, 1991; Emerson et al, 2005; Beyer et al, 1999). Lonsdale (1990) asserts that higher proportions of disabled women are unemployed or they are employed in low skilled positions where they earn less income. Similarly, Roulstone and Barnes (2005: 21) argue that disabled women are more likely than men to be absent from paid work. Barnes (1991) notes that of those disabled people in full-time work, male workers earned about a quarter less and female workers earned about a third less than non-disabled workers. Similarly, Smith Randolph and Anderson (2004) have asserted that disabled women in the USA are at a higher risk of being unemployed than disabled men.

One of the main strategies of the British government in improving the life chances of disabled people is ‘increasing the number of disabled people in employment while providing support and security for those unable to work’ (PMSU, 2005: 14). In this regard, the government has provided some welfare to work policies that have been massively criticised and raise real issues about the citizenship rights of disabled people. I will return to discuss this issue later in chapters seven and ten. Here I will review all employment policies and programmes for disabled people

Employment policy

The 1944 Disabled Person’s Employment Act

According to Barnes (1991) and Hyde (1996, 2000), the 1944 Disabled Person’s Employment Act was the first major United Kingdom legislation to address the employment needs of disabled people, but its provisions were contradictory. The

principle that disabled people should have a right to mainstream employment opportunities found expression in the Quota Scheme, a 'demand side' measure which required employers with 20 or more employees to ensure that at least 3% of their workforce were disabled (Barnes, 1991; Hyde, 1996, 2000). However, there have been only 10 prosecutions for a failure to comply, even though a majority of employers have always been under quota 'between 1944 to 1958' (Hyde, 1996). In reality, 'the decision to exclude disabled people from mainstream industry was fundamental to post-war employment policy. This was reflected in the introduction of a range of 'supply side' measures, such as jobsearch advice, 'rehabilitation' for disabled workers and financial inducements for employers' (Hyde, 2000: 328) and the provision of segregated employment opportunities in sheltered workshops (Hyde, 1996, 1998).

In this regard, the rehabilitation of disabled servicemen was to be achieved by establishing the Industrial Rehabilitation Units (IRUs) (Riddell et al, 2002) with the aim of facilitating fitness of people with physical impairment (Barnes, 1991). It planned to return disabled people to mainstream employment (Floyd, 1997: 37). The post war employment policy attempt to increase the job-opportunities of disabled people were undermined by a 'personal tragedy' view of disabled people. For example, the social security benefits encouraged disabled people to stay on benefits rather than enter employment (Riddell et al, 2002), and the creation of long-term 'out-of-work' benefits tended to reinforce exclusion from paid employment (Hyde, 2000: 328).

In fact, many disabled people were segregated into special employment programmes, particularly in sheltered employment (Hyde, 1996, 1998). In this regard, **the 1958 Disabled Persons Employment Act** enabled local authorities to provide sheltered workshops and this framework of provision has been in place for most of the post-war period (Hyde, 1996). Many local authorities and some voluntary organisations developed 'sheltered workshops as an alternative to those traditional day services, where contract work was performed and a work culture was promoted. Workers generally received an allowance up to the maximum earnings disregard' (Gosling & Cotterill, 1998: 1004). According to Labour Research (1995), sheltered employment was gradually replaced with 'supported' employment in 1985. Since 1985, Conservative governments have reduced workshop provision and replaced it with financial support for workers who have been placed by the Employment Service into mainstream employment (Barnes, 1991; Murray, 1994). Because workshop provision was seen as working against progression to open employment, the restructuring of sheltered

employment provision was an exercise to improve the employment circumstances of disabled people (Department of Employment, 1990; Johnson et al, 1992).

From 1958 to 1980s a number of employment acts were passed which aimed to support disabled people in accessing employment. These Acts included the Disabled Persons Employment Act 1960, the Contracts of Employment and Redundancy Payments Act 1965, the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the Employment and Training Act 1973, the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, the Transport and Works Act 1992, the Pension Schemes Act 1993. Beyer et al (2004: 13) reported after the Second World War, most disabled people who were capable of doing work, moved into the sheltered workshops and many people with 'intellectual impairments' who were seen as 'incapable of work were excluded from employment. Then, 'during the 1980s, the publication, *An Ordinary Working Life* (King's Fund, 1984), argued that people with learning disabilities had as much right as any other citizens to valued rewarding and un segregated employment'. Therefore, they had more chances to develop their skills through Adult Training Centres which were established with the aim of providing general work skills for disabled people.

In essence, the Employment Act was made for disabled people to access mainstream employment. However, it had some limitations which affected the implementation of the Act: it did not include all ranges of disabled people like people with mental health problems; it did include some range of firms (for example, firms with 20 or less employees) (Riddell et al, 2002); it was never enforced (Doyle, 1995); and it adopted a medical model of disability, identifying individual disability as the main reason for high levels of unemployment among disabled people (Hyde, 2000). This Act was replaced by the employment provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) (Hyde, 2000).

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Following the limitations of the previous Act, the 1995 Act provided individuals with a legal right to pursue litigation against employers if they felt that they had been discriminated against because they were disabled (Singh, 1995). Part 2 of the Act² was based on the principle that disabled people should not be discriminated against in

² Based on this act, it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person in respect of recruitment, terms of employment, promotion, transfer, and training, any other benefit and dismissal, or to subject them to any other detriment (see DfEE, 1996, paragraphs 4.1 to 4.11). Where a disabled person is placed at a "substantial disadvantage" in comparison with people who are not disabled, the employer has a duty to make "reasonable adjustments" to prevent that effect (see DfEE, 1996, paragraphs 4.12 to 4.34).

employment or when seeking employment (see DDA, paragraphs 3.8 to 3.14). According to the DDA, 'employers of 15 or more employees are acting unlawfully under the Act if they discriminate against current or prospective employees because of their disability, unless there is good reason' (see DfEE, 1996, paragraph 4.2). 'Employers have to make sure they do not discriminate against disabled people in consideration for promotion as well as initial employment. Employers must also not discriminate in respect of other conditions of service'. Perhaps the key feature of this section of the Act dictates that the employer must make 'reasonable adjustments' to the particular needs and capacities of the disabled person (see DfEE, 1996, paragraphs 4.20 to 4.34). However, the perception of what constitutes reasonable adjustment is not codified by the Act, being left to the discretion of individual employers, who may not exactly approximate the cost of achieving it (Stevens, 2002: 781).

Like the 1944 and 1958 Disabled Person Employment Acts, the 1995 DDA had some limitations which affected its implementation. The continued influence of the medical model which 'offers redress for 'treatment less favourable' and where the reason was due to disability and where the 'treatment' was not 'justified' (see Roulstone 2003: 10, 2003a: 118; Riddell et al, 2002), did not apply to employers with fewer than 15 employees and some groups of employees³ (see DfEE, 1996, paragraph 2.7) and it was not enforced (Pannell & Simons, 2000). Therefore, in overcoming the limitations of the DDA, the Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment) Regulations 2003 extended the DDA to firms with fewer than 15 employees and provided new protection for disabled fire-fighters, police, office holders, barristers, partners in partnerships and people seeking vocational qualifications (PMSU, 2005: 17-18). The provisions were brought into force by the **Disability Rights Commission Code of Practice: Employment and Occupation in October 2004**. This Code of Practice gives practical guidance on how to prevent discrimination against disabled people in employment or when seeking employment. It describes the duties of employers and others in this regard. The Code helps disabled people to understand the law and explains what they can do if they feel that they have been discriminated against. The Code helps employers to avoid workplace disputes and to work towards the elimination of discrimination against disabled people (see DRC, 2004, paragraph 3.1). After October 2004, the DDA provisions applied 'to all employers in respect of people they employ wholly or partly at

³ Members of the Armed Forces; prison officers; fire-fighters; employers who work wholly or mainly outside Great Britain; members of the Ministry of Defence Police; the British Transport Police; the Royal Parks Constabulary and United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary; and other police officers who are outside of Great Britain (DfEE, 1996: 4).

an establishment in Great Britain and outside of Great Britain' (see DRC, 2004, paragraphs 3.9 to 3.12).

A social security and benefits system

The Social security benefits system is the main source of income for most disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties in the UK (Heenan, 2002; DoH, 2001). These benefits were established after the Second World War to support disabled people based on an assumption of 'incapacity' for work which was consistent with a 'personal tragedy' view of disability (Gibbs, 2005; Gosling & Cotterill, 2000: 1009; JRF, 1998; Simons, 1998). Social security benefits are complemented by a range of long-term 'out of work' social security benefits including social insurance benefit, Invalidity Benefit (IVB) which was replaced by Incapacity Benefit (IB) in 1995 (Hyde, 2000: 329; Hyde, 1998: 203) for people who have paid National Insurance contributions, but are unable to work (Heenan, 2002: 386). Burchardt (2000) categorised disability benefits as earnings-replacement benefits, extra-costs benefits, means-tested benefits, and compensatory benefits. Hence:

Earning-replacement benefits (for example, Incapacity Benefit) provide an income for individuals unable to earn, or carry out their normal functions, as a result of sickness or disability. Extra-costs benefits (for example, Disability Living Allowance) provide help towards additional costs incurred as a result of disability. Means-tested benefits (for example, Income Support) top up income to a minimum level, the exact level being determined by household size, any special needs and housing costs. Compensatory benefits (for example, Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit) are for individuals who have become sick or disabled as a result of 'serving the nation' whether in a military or ordinary occupational capacity (Burchardt, 2000: 30).

DLA and SDA are two main benefit entitlements in the UK for disabled people (Thomson et al, 1995), particularly those with learning difficulties. The most significant part of the majority of people with learning difficulties' income is from the benefits rather than employment (Beyer et al, 2004). The benefits system made it more difficult for people with learning difficulties to do paid work (JRF research, 2001; see Simons, 1998). Those people who receive IB can earn no more than £20⁴ per week. If they earn more, it affects their receipt of benefits such as IS, Housing Benefits (HB), and

⁴ From April 2001, the 'earnings disregard' in income-related benefits rose from £15 to £20 and it allowed disabled people to earn up-to £20 per week.

Community Taxes Benefit (CTB) (Beyer et al, 2004: 21; AFSE, 2003). Previously, some researchers (Gosling & Cotterill, 2000; Pannell & Simons, 2000; Simons & Watson, 1999; Simons, 1998; Beyer et al, 1996) highlighted how those people claiming Income Support cannot work for more than 16 hours per week, and if they earn a penny over the £15 'earning disregard limit' they would be in danger of losing all of their income support and disability benefits for that week. The existence of the Disability Living Allowance provides further support for people in work. However, the extent to which people with learning difficulties and their families negotiate Disability Living Allowance with wages remains unclear. Indeed, the increase from £15 to £20 for therapeutic earnings may well hold back rather than support more people accessing full-time paid work (Corden et al, 2003).

In addition, the Disability Working Allowance was replaced with a new Disabled Person's Tax Credit (DPTC) by the Labour government (Gosling & Cotterill, 2000; Burchardt, 2000) which is intended to increase incentives to work (Gosling & Cotterill, 2000: 1002). Disabled Person's Tax Credit is a key improvement of work and welfare systems which make work more accessible for disabled people who are able to work 16 plus hours (Roulstone, 2003: 15). In addition, the extension of the Incapacity Benefit from 8 weeks to one year allows and encourages more disabled people to participate in the labour market (Jacobs & Winyard cited in Roulstone, 2003: 15).

The current social welfare policy in the UK is likely to reinforce the social exclusion of disabled people through the social security benefits (Hyde, 2000). The social security benefits are 'failing to ameliorate poverty' (Disability Alliance, 1991 cited in Hyde, 2000: 328) and the 'availability of long-term out of work benefits has reinforced exclusion from paid employment' (Hyde, 2000: 328). Therefore, some researchers (JRF, 1998; Burchardt, 2000a; Gosling & Cotterill, 2000) suggest changing the current benefits system to a flexible benefit system (see below). As well as contributing to social exclusion, the benefit system also has a negative effect on the self-esteem of disabled people (Heenan, 2002). Despite the fact that the benefit system has taken some account of the particular difficulties faced by disabled people, it has failed to address many of the fundamental issues such as the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by disabled people in the labour market (Heenan, 2002: 384). The benefits trap continues to work against those with more substantial supported living packages wishing to enter supported employment (O'Bryan et al cited in Roulstone, 2003: 15). The social security benefits policies also have resulted in remarkably high rates of

economic inactivity and unemployment among disabled people (Barnes et al, 1999; Hyde, 2000).

Roulstone and Barnes (2005: 20) asserted that the central thrust of policy for disabled people is to provide ‘work for those who can, welfare for those who cannot’ (see Riddell et al, 2002; Stanley, 2005). Therefore, the Labour government introduced a number of employment measures in its new welfare to work programme for those on ‘out of work’, such as Supported Employment (Stanley, 2005; Riddell et al, 2002) and the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) (Gradwell, 2005; Roulstone, 2002; DSS, 1998b; Stanley, 2005). I will introduce these in the section below:

The New Deal for Disabled People

The NDDP was established in September 1998 and implemented nationally in July 2001. It is a voluntary programme that aims to assist disabled people on Incapacity Benefits to move into sustained employment (PMSU, 2005; Stafford, 2005). The NDDP is delivered by around 60 Job Brokers⁵, who are a mix of public, private, and voluntary sector organisations (Loumidis et al, 2001; Ashworth et al, 2003; Beyer et al, 2004; Stafford, 2005; Aston et al, 2005; Woodward et al, 2003; Corden et al, 2003; Riddell et al, 2002). The programme is available to people claiming one of the ‘qualifying benefits⁶’ (Ashworth et al, 2003; Aston et al, 2005; Heenan, 2002). It guarantees people that they can go back on benefit at the same level of entitlement, at any time up to twelve months after taking a job (Heenan, 2002: 388).

The NDDP put the stress on assisting people on long-term sick or disability benefits to move off benefits into paid work (Roulstone, 2000; Gosling & Cotterill, 2000; PMSU, 2005). The NDDP also gives disabled people a chance to exercise their right to work (Heenan, 2002). Simons (1998) claimed that inclusion of supported employment in wider employment programmes, including the New Deal, welfare to work and economic regeneration strategies is a good way of solving the vocational problems of people with learning difficulties. The NDDP has been created to help unemployed

⁵ There are four distinct Job Broker types: Jobcentre Plus, private sector, voluntary group and disability group (Aston et al, 2005; PMSU, 2005).

⁶ Qualifying benefits are: Incapacity Benefit; Severe Disablement Allowance; Income Support with a Disability Premium; Income Support pending the result of an appeal against disallowance from Incapacity Benefit; Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit with a Disability Premium - provided customers are not in paid work of 16 hours a week or more, or getting Jobseekers Allowance; Disability Living Allowance - provided customers are not in paid work of 16 hours a week or more, or getting Jobseekers Allowance; War Pension with an Unemployability Supplement; Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit with an Unemployability Supplement; National Insurance credits on grounds of incapacity (Ashworth et al, 2003; Aston et al, 2005).

disabled people into work by closing the gap between the skills employers want and the skills people can offer (The Labour Government, 2000). It increases the employers' awareness of the ability of disabled people and gives more employment opportunities to disabled people.

The NDDP is divided into four main areas⁷. The main focus of the NDDP was the introduction of a Personal Advisor Service which was piloted in September 1998 in six areas and administered by the Employment Service. Then, it was extended to a further six areas in April 1999 and delivered by a range of private and voluntary organisations (Heenan, 2002: 384). Personal advisors are co-ordinating employment support services and advice on welfare benefits (Hyde, 2000: 329). They have a vital role in matching disabled people with suitable jobs (Roulstone, 2000: 437), but have the NDDP been successful in supporting disabled people into work?

While the NDDP aimed to help unemployed disabled people who claim benefit to go off of the benefit and to go back into work (Stafford, 2005; Heenan, 2002), some researchers argued that the NDDP had some limitations.

Firstly, a Personal Advisor Service which was the main focus of the NDDP in supporting disabled people to get employment was not expertly handled 'the expertise of personal advisor is not empirically grounded' (Roulstone, 2000: 437; Stafford, 2005), and 'their competence is questionable' (Heenan, 2002: 384).

Secondly, the NDDP would be unhelpful if a disabled person does not want to go to work or if an employer does not want to employ disabled people as a result of his negative perceptions about disabled workers (Heenan, 2002).

Thirdly, disabled people had negative experiences going off Incapacity Benefits and back to work because of their difficulties in finding and maintaining a suitable job (Dorsett, 1998).

Fourthly, the negative perceptions of disabled people as 'unable to work' would discourage them from attempting to go to work and to change their entitlement to benefit (Howard, 1997).

Fifthly, a lot of disabled people who claimed Incapacity Benefit had low qualifications and limited work experience, therefore, the NDDP would not be successful for them (Arthur et al, 1999).

Finally, as Roulstone (2000) and Stafford (2005) criticised the expertise of the personal advisor, I will argue that the level of awareness of most personal advisors of

⁷Innovative schemes; a personal advisor service; a help line and information campaign; and research and evaluation (Roulstone, 2000: 433; Heenan, 2002: 388).

the ability of people with learning difficulties is low and the NDDP would not be successful in supporting them to get employment. Regarding investigating the effect of the NDDP on the employment of people with learning difficulties, further research will be suggested.

Supported Employment Programme (SEP) in Great Britain

Supported employment has been adopted by the British government as the term to describe all forms of ‘assisted’ employment, including Sheltered workshops⁸ and the Sheltered Placements Scheme⁹ (SPS) (Beyer et al, 2003; Simons & Watson, 1999: 18), integrated paid employment¹⁰ (Pannell & Simons, 2000), intermediate labour markets and supported schemes (Curran et al cited in PMSU, 2005). Similarly, Beyer et al (1999) note that the term ‘Supported employment’ is used by the UK government’s Employment Service responsible for the vocational rehabilitation of people with learning disabilities, to explain sheltered workshops and a wage subsidy scheme. Hence:

Supported employment is a key element of government support to disabled people wanting to enter or re-enter employment. The Supported Employment Programme (SEP) was established in the 1940’s in response to the needs of people disabled in war. Remploy Ltd was incorporated in 1945 to provide employment for disabled people through government sponsorship, initially through sheltered workshops and latterly in a range of jobs in ordinary companies through their Interwork scheme. Local Authorities have had the power to provide sheltered employment in factories to disabled people in their local area since 1958. Voluntary Bodies also provide employment in supported factories, either under direct grant from ES (now Jobcentre Plus) or as agents for local authorities. The Supported Placement Scheme (SPS) element began in 1985 and provided a route through which disabled people can find jobs in ordinary companies. Local Authorities and Voluntary Bodies acted as Sponsors for SPS, finding them a job with a ‘host’ company. Contracts with Local Authorities and Voluntary Bodies are managed by the Supported Employment Procurement Advice and Consultancy Service (SEPACS) on a regional basis, while contract arrangements with Remploy Ltd are managed centrally within ES.

(Beyer et al, 2003: 2)

⁸ Sheltered workshops were often set up by local authorities (and organisations such as Remploy) in the immediate post-war years. These small factories or workshops are designed specifically to employ disabled people. Although most pay some sort of wage, they are segregated settings.

⁹ The SPS provides a subsidy for employers taking on disabled workers. Since workers continue to be paid by a sponsoring agency (usually a local authority or voluntary organisation), they tend to have rather a different status from their co-workers.

¹⁰ Integrated paid employment obtained with the assistance of a supported employment agency. The function of supported employment agencies is to help disabled people find and maintain paid employment in integrated settings (Pannell & Simons, 2000: 37).

‘Supported employment is the provision of intensive help for individuals to find, get and sustain paid work of their choice in ordinary competitive employment’ (Schneider et al, 2004). Supported employment is a very important area of social policy provision for disabled people in the UK (Hyde, 1998). It is regarded as a major vehicle for enabling people with learning difficulties to find and hold down real jobs in open employment (Wilson, 2003; Shearn & Jones, 2002; Beyer et al, 2003; Bass & Drewett, 1996; Pannell & Simons, 2000). The aim of SEP is to provide additional support for disabled people through several public, private and voluntary sector organisations to get open employment (Beyer et al, 2003, 2004).

Similarly, the literature in the USA (Wehman, 1996b, Rusch et al, 1991, Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Olson et al, 2001; Gray et al, 2000; Pendergast & Storey, 1999) has defined supported employment as the only successful way of getting paid work in integrated settings with intensive on-going support for people with ‘mental retardation’. The employment policy of the European Commission (cited in Saloviita, 2000: 90) encouraged the development of SEP in its member states. For example, the SEP was provided in Norway for three years (Mathisen cited in Saloviita, 2000: 90), and in Finland for three years towards the employment of people with learning disabilities (Saloviita, 2000: 95). However, the SEP in Finland was not very successful because of the ignorance and prejudice of the employers and lack of funding (Saloviita, 2000: 91-2).

The advantages of the SEP for people with learning difficulties, in the UK, have been reported by some studies. For example:

People with learning difficulties in particular emphasised the supportive environment in SEP jobs: a more suitable pace of work and learning; the opportunity to prove that they can work with the right help; and a boost to self esteem, confidence and independence. Some commented on feeling more powerful, contributing to society and not just depending on government welfare benefits. It was important to be able to show that you could do a ‘real job’ and were not just ‘a disabled person as cheap labour (Beyer et al, 2003: 40).

Entering SEP is the opportunity to meet new people and make new friendships, especially with non-disabled people (Bass & Drewett, 1996). However, Schneider et al (2004: 25) argued that ‘working alongside others may not guarantee that a person is accepted and included, and working in isolation does not necessarily mean that a person feels left out’. It also offers disabled people a combination of developing vocational profile, developing job, analysing job and supporting job (O’Bryan et al, 2000). It helps

people to gain real jobs, real wages and work in integrated settings (Wilson, 2003; Beyer et al, 2003; Pannell & Simons, 2000; Terlizz, 1997). The satisfaction of disabled people with their supported employment services were emphasised by some researchers (Gosling & Cotterill, 2000; Beyer et al, 2003). According to Hyde (1998) 53% of people on supported employment were satisfied with their jobs. In addition, Beyer et al (2003: 38) argued that the level of satisfaction of disabled workers from their supported employment organisation was very high.

The opportunities of supported employment placements for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties, are restricted, and available only to a minority of disabled people in the UK (Gosling & Cotterill, 2000; Bass & Drewett, 1996; Beyer & Kilsby, 1996, 1997). Beyer (1995) notes that the number of supported employment schemes in the UK increased during the late 1980s, from 24 in 1988 to 79 in 1991. Beyer and his colleagues (Beyer et al, 1997) were able to identify over 200 supported employment agencies that were working either wholly or largely within the definition of supported employment previously mentioned. Similarly, Pannell and Simons (2000) reported that over the last decade, the number of disabled people in supported employment had increased. The Association for Supported Employment (AFSE) (2002) represents more than 200 agencies in the UK assisting disabled people to gain paid employment (see Gradwell, 2005).

In relation to the limitation of the SEP, some evidence highlighted that lack of funding is one of the significant factors which prevent supported employment agencies from developing their services and support for people with learning difficulties (Wilson, 2003; O'Bryan et al, 2000; AFSE, 2000; Pozner et al, 1993; Simons & Watson, 1999). Beyer et al (1997) reported that 58 per cent of the total income of supported employment agencies comes from social services departments, 15 percent from health authorities and only 5% from employment services. In addition some researchers (O'Bryan et al, 2000; Beyer, 1995; Beyer & Kilsby, 1996) highlight that the benefits system has also been seen as one of the important barriers to the development and to the increase of supported employment schemes in the UK.

As it mentioned above, the SEP had many advantages for disabled workers, particularly those with learning difficulties. Most disabled people were satisfied with the job and support provided by the SEP. However, despite these satisfactions, Beyer et al (2003: 39) reported that disabled people who were in SEP were dissatisfied with their wages. A significant question remains: Were supported employment programmes

successful in helping people with learning difficulties get ‘meaningful work’? I will return to address this question later on Chapter Nine.

The White Paper Valuing People and employment

Alongside the above legislative developments has been *the 2001 White Paper, Valuing People*. According to the White Paper, people with learning disabilities should have the same opportunities as other people in the community ‘to lead full and active lives and should receive the support needed to make this possible’ (p. 26). In this regard, the White Paper sets out the Government’s objective of providing adequate opportunities for people with learning difficulties to lead full and independent lives in the community. This paper acknowledges that employment is a major aspiration for adults with learning difficulties, but less than ten percent generally are in work, so ‘most of them remain heavily dependent on social security benefits’ (DoH, 2001: 20). Therefore, one of the UK government objectives in improving their quality of life is

To enable more people with learning disabilities to participate in all forms of employment, wherever possible in paid work and to make a valued contribution to the world of work (DoH, 2001: 26).

The White Paper acknowledged that ‘the government believes that employment is an important route to social inclusion and that all those who wish to work should have the opportunities and support to do so. Our Welfare to Work agenda is designed to increase employment opportunities for those who can work while retaining support for those who are unable to work’ (p. 84). The White Paper described some barriers to the employment of people with learning difficulties, such as low expectations of professionals of what people with learning difficulties can achieve, inflexibility of the benefit system and difficulties in transition from supported employment schemes into mainstream employment. Therefore, in moving people with learning difficulties into employment, the White Paper suggested some key actions to the British government. Hence

- New Government target for increasing numbers of people with learning disabilities in work
- New Workstep Programme will benefit people with learning disabilities.
- Joint Department of Health/Department for Education and Employment scoping study into links between supported employment and day services.

- Job Brokers under the New Deal for Disabled People will have skills in working with people with learning disabilities.
- Disabled people starting work will not lose Disability Living Allowance unfairly.
- Learning Disability Partnership Boards to develop local employment strategies.
- Better employment opportunities in public services for people with learning disabilities (DoH, 2001: 85).

Is the British government successful in the above actions? In Chapter Seven I will consider the employment realities for people with learning difficulties since the White Paper set out the above objectives for the British government in 2001. It is clear that some initiatives have been implemented, like providing the Workstep Programme for people with learning difficulties and studying the links between day centres and mainstream employment (see Beyer et al, 2004 and DoH, 2002). However, the number of people with learning difficulties in employment is still low and some employment programmes were not successful in entering people with learning difficulties into the mainstream employment such as Access to Work (see Beyer et al, 2004: 15), and the NDDP (see Roulstone, 2000 and Heenan, 2002).

Box 1

Other employment programmes for disabled people

Workstep is the current SEP provided by Jobcentre Plus, with an emphasis on increasing the proportion of people who move from supported to mainstream employment (PMSU, 2005: 158). Workstep replaced the Supported Employment Programme in April 2001, with the explicit aim of supporting disabled people particularly those who have barriers to finding and keeping work (Corden et al, 2003; Beyer et al, 2003; PMSU, 2005) or disabled people who are long-term unemployed or on Incapacity Benefit and gives modified support and training to both employees and employers (Beyer et al, 2004: 11). Workstep highlights the government's commitment to paid employment in mainstream employment as a key reference point for disabled people. It 'represents an obvious effort to match disabled workers to employment opportunities' (Roulstone et al, 2003: 4).

Social Firms: A social firm is a business created for the employment of disabled and non-disabled people in the labour market (Beyer et al, 2004: 11). It is a business

which uses its market oriented production of goods and services to pursue its social mission. A significant number of its employees will be disabled people or other disadvantaged groups, in the labour market. Every worker is paid a market-rate wage or salary according to his productive capacity. Work opportunities should be equal between disabled and non-disabled employees. All employees have the same employment rights and obligations (the UK Social Firm Support Group cited Gosling & Cotterill, 2000: 1006; Secker et al, 2003).

Permitted Work: '(previously 'therapeutic work'): people are allowed to work for up to 16 hours a week without loss of Incapacity Benefits for 26 weeks for as long as they like provided they have ongoing regular support and supervision)' (Beyer et al, 2004: 11; PMSU, 2005).

Voluntary Work: It has been identified as 'work for a non-profit making organisation on an unpaid basis' (Beyer et al, 2004: 11).

Work Experience: on-the job placements for a fixed period.

Work Preparation: It is an individually tailored programme designed to help people with health conditions or disabilities return to work following a period of sickness or unemployment (Riddell et al, 2002; Riddell & Banks, 2005; Corden et al, 2003). It can also help people who are at risk of losing their job because of their disability by helping them to overcome difficulties that are affecting their work. Work Preparation aims to help people overcome obstacles that are preventing them from finding suitable employment, and to give individuals a chance to 'test the water' after a prolonged period out of work (Riddell et al, 2002). Suitable work placements are found for an individual to experience work in a real environment and to meet an individual's particular needs. The programme may last from a few days to 13 weeks, six weeks being the average length (Corden et al, 2003; see Riddell et al, 2002). Disability Service Team (DST) managers pointed out that this programme is not suitable for people with higher support needs, such as people with learning disabilities; a 13 week programme did not allow them to 'dip their toe in the water'. Therefore, they would need much longer term employment support (Riddell & Banks, 2005: 64).

Access to Work (AtW): It provided practical assistance to disabled people to enable them to retain employment through a system of grants, but 'it failed to challenge effectively differential access to the labour market' (Riddell et al, 2002: 217; PMSU, 2005). It also 'supported 36, 500 disabled people in work in 2002/3. People with

learning difficulties represent around two per cent of people accessing the scheme' (Beyer et al, 2004: 11). Evaluations of this programme has shown that AtW is effective, it is not suitable to address the needs of all disabled people but is valued by those it does support and could be improved and amended to meet the needs of more disabled people (Stanley, 2005: 36).

Pathway to Work has also been designed to improve work opportunities for those on Incapacity Benefit. 'It sets out a strategy for encouraging and assisting those people moving onto Incapacity Benefit to return to work. The aim is to enable people to overcome obstacles to work, by focusing on their capabilities and thereby challenging the belief that people with health conditions are incapable of doing any work. It has been piloted in three areas since October 2003, and a further four areas since April 2004' (PMSU, 2005: 18). DWP published a 'Framework for Vocational Rehabilitation' in October 2004. This framework pulled together information about best practice, research and available capacity, and is in support of progress along the roadmap towards Incapacity Benefit reform (PMSU, 2005: 19).

Beyer et al (2004: 4-5) also identified several employment related services for the day centres in terms of supporting people with learning difficulties to gain employment. These include Learning and Skills Councils, Connexions Service, Jobcentre Plus, Disability Employment Advisor, Specialist Training and Work Preparation Providers, and Specialist Employment Agencies. I will argue that recent Government policy has delivered some significant improvement in the employment prospects of disabled people but further action is needed to support disabled people in the labour market (PMSU, 2005: 132). I hope that the 2005 Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, *Improving the life chances of disabled people*, which is the recent strategy that aimed to improve the quality of life for disabled people as equal members of society, could implement these policies to enable disabled people to be included in society.

It is worth noting that at the time of writing this chapter, the PMSU has just been published. So, I considered this report in the later chapters.

The nature of employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties

Significantly, those people with learning difficulties who are employed often experience very poor employment circumstances (Roulstone, 2004, 2003; Beyer et al, 2004; Hornby & Kidd, 2001; and Norouzi, 2003a, 2004c). The current literature on employment for people with learning difficulties reveals a number of negative characteristics. However, there are some positive characteristics of employment for people with learning difficulties which I will explore below.

The Disability Rights Commission (2004: 18, paragraph 2.4) suggest 'Do not assume that people with learning disabilities cannot be valuable employees, or that they can only do low status jobs'. This message from DRC is to emphasise that people with learning difficulties are valuable employees and they can do many jobs as well as non-disabled people. What is the reality for people with learning difficulties? Many researchers have stated that most people with learning difficulties, who are employed, work in low-status occupations (Beyer et al, 2004; Pannell & Simons, 2000; Roulstone, 2004 and; Bass & Drewett, 1996) as service workers or labourers, cleaner or laundry worker, kitchen assistant, shop assistant; warehousing assistant; recycling assistant; gardener, office worker, packaging assistant, nursery assistant, counter assistant, pricing clothes, work in charity shops and self-advocacy organisations. These researchers also asserted that the number of people with learning difficulties who are in paid work is very low. However, Beyer et al (2004) reported that the majority of people with learning difficulties interviewed who worked were paid, but with low wage.

Having adequate income is a key element of participation: for the goods and services it can purchase, and for its role in facilitating better health and educational achievement, and greater opportunities for social and political participation (Burchardt, 2000: 1). Despite the importance of income for disabled people, those who are in work earn less than their non-disabled colleagues (PMSU, 2005; Schneider et al, 2004; Roulstone, 2003; Berthoud et al, 1993), and live on very low income (Barnes & Roulstone, 2005; Heenan, 2002). In this regard, many researchers note that most people with learning difficulties who are employed receive the minimum wage or less (Beyer, et al, 1999, 2003, 2004; Bass & Drewett, 1996; Secker et al, 2003). Shearn et al (2000: 36) argue that the wages available to people with 'intellectual disabilities' are usually inadequate to secure any move from benefit to earned income. Chadsey-Rusch et al (1997) reported

that in their study in the USA, the average salary of employees with ‘mental retardation’ was under the minimum wage.

Most disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties who are employed, work part-time (Reid & Bray, 1998; Terlizzi, 1997; Roulstone, 2004; Pannell & Simons, 2000; Burchardt, 2000; Barnes et al, 1999). Most of them preferred to work full-time (Russell, 2002). Beyer et al (2004: 2) assert that ‘most people worked for less than five hours per week, some worked five to 15 hours, and a small minority worked more than 16 hours’ because they were not allowed to earn more than £20 per week as income support disregard. Beyer et al (2004) submit that one of the disadvantages of low working hours is lack of time for people with learning difficulties who need more time to learn job skills. However, Roulstone et al (2003) reported that most respondents in their study (75%) worked full-time¹¹.

People with learning difficulties ‘faced problems accessing and maintaining employment’ (Roulstone, 2004: 195). Reid and Bray (1998) reported the length of time in the current job for people with learning difficulties ranged from a few months to 20 plus years in New Zealand. A mean of 38 months for people with learning difficulties was found in the English study undertaken by Schneider et al (2004: 21).

Working in integrated work placements provide opportunities for people with learning difficulties for interaction with non-disabled colleagues (Rusch, 1992); and working in segregated placements brings exclusion from social integration (Pannell & Simons, 2000). Despite several advantages of working in integrated work placements for people with learning difficulties, some researchers highlight that people with learning difficulties still work in segregated placements (Yates, 2000; Simons & Watson, 1999; Norouzi, 2003a, 2004c). Kraemer and Blacher (2001) reported in their study in the USA, that the majority (54%) of students with ‘mental retardation’ who have left the school system, are working in segregated environments.

The above literature highlights that the employment circumstances of most people with learning difficulties are very poor and they are excluded from having a proper job with proper pay in mainstream employment. Therefore, in the following sections I will review some employment barriers which prevented people with learning difficulties from having paid employment in mainstream placements.

¹¹ In general workers in the UK work the longest hours in Europe. The average of weekly working hours in the UK, for male employees was 45.2 hours, and for female employees were 40. 7 in 1999 (ILO, 2000; and Social Trends, 2001 cited in Roulstone, 2002: 635).

Barriers to employment

Disabling barriers such as discrimination, the built environment, and policy design have a damaging effect on life chances and lead to many disabled people living in poverty, social exclusion and with low educational outcomes. The result is that many disabled people face social and economic marginalisation from society. These poor outcomes for disabled people create a high level of inequality (PMSU, 2005: 50).

People with learning difficulties are a group facing the greatest employment barriers in society (Roulstone, 2004: 197). Beyer et al (2004: 5-6) identified employment barriers as '*structural barriers* including: the inflexibility of the benefit system, negative attitudes on the part of employers and society in general, and the reluctance of some carers to support employment, unavailability of employment support and lack of transport; and *individual barriers* including: poor communication ability, lack of concentration, lack of social skills, and lack of basic independence skills'. Similarly, Roulstone (2004: 197) and Roulstone et al (2003: 3) identified employment barriers as personal, attitudinal, environmental and governmental, such as law and benefits. In this research, based on the Beyer et al (2004) categorisation, I classified all barriers into two main groups: structural barriers, and individual and psychological barriers.

Structural barriers

Structural barriers included socio-political and cultural barriers to the employment of people with learning difficulties. One of the important structural barriers is negative attitude of employers towards disabled people. The DRC (2004: paragraph 3.15) notes that the DDA makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person in relation to the recruitment or retention of staff¹². Although employers are not allowed to discriminate against disabled people, a lot of evidence shows negative attitudes of employers toward disabled people, particularly people with learning difficulties (PMSU, 2005; Sapey, 2004; Schneider et al, 2004; Beyer et al, 1999, 2004;

¹² In relation to recruitment, the Act (DRC, 2004: paragraph 3.18) says, 'It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person:

- in the arrangements made for determining who should be offered employment
- in the terms on which the disabled person is offered employment, or
- by refusing to offer, or deliberately not offering, the disabled person employment'.

Heenan, 2002; Burchardt, 2000; Norouzi, 2003b, 2004c; Roulstone, 2004; Roulstone et al, 2003)

Employers often perceive disabled people to be a greater risk to health and safety and to have lower rates of productivity than non-disabled employees (Johnson et al, 1988; Blanck, 1991; PMSU, 2005). In addition, employers have concerns about increased costs of employing disabled workers in their workplace (Russell, 2002). Therefore, employers are unprepared to become more flexible in relation to issues like working hours. Such inflexibility excludes many disabled people who are unable to work a full 35-40 hour week due to tiredness and physical impairment (Kitchin et al, 1998).

I have argued that negative attitude of employers towards people with learning difficulties is a major barrier to employing. For example, Paul Savage (cited Norouzi & Savage, 2005) states:

People with learning disabilities prefer to have paid jobs rather than doing voluntary work...Most people with learning disabilities don't get paid. I think some employers don't like to employ us because we have learning disabilities.

The negative attitude of employers is because many of them have little or no experience of working with people with learning difficulties (Beyer et al, 2004; Gosling & Cotterill, 2000), and they have little awareness of employment support programmes for them (PMSU, 2005; Schneider et al, 2004; Aston et al, 2005). In addition, employers do not see the abilities of people with learning difficulties (Kitchin et al, 1998), and they are concerned about the people with learning difficulties' 'competency and dependability' (Craig & Body, 1990: 41).

Therefore, they view people with learning difficulties as an unable group and do not offer any jobs to them. Employers, who worked with people with 'mental retardation' in the workplace, in the USA, had more positive attitudes about their abilities (Levy et al, 1992), and they are willing to provide extra supervision, flexible hours, and job coaches in support of workers with mental retardation (Olson et al, 2001).

Bailey (2004) and Beyer et al (2003: 56) have argued that the *negative attitude of co-workers* towards disabled colleagues is an important issue in getting and keeping a job for disabled people. Similarly, some researchers (Matthes, 1992; Burchardt, 2000) have mentioned that the negative attitude of workmates and colleagues towards employees with learning difficulties is one of the key barriers to employment. Olsen

(2003) reports that in his study some people with learning difficulties do not like their workplace because other workers bully them.

Beyer et al (2004: 59) argue that *the reluctance of some carers* to support employment for people with learning difficulties is a major employment barrier. This reluctance is largely because they are concerned about the ability of the person with a learning disability to cope or to avoid harm. In addition, 'through entering employment the individual would lose access to day services, and thus the carer would lose an important source of respite, or the individual's benefit entitlement would be affected'. In addition, Beyer et al (2004: 73) argue that the 'families discouraged people with learning disabilities from going to work', particularly if households were dependent on income from benefits. Based on employment policy¹³ in the UK (DDA, 1995, DRC, 2004) all organisations employing more than 15 employers must provide work for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties. However, this is still ignored by many employers and *there is not enough power to implement the policy* and to enforce employers to implement the legislation (Pannell & Simons, 2000). The Act has not, in practice, been enforced (Doyle, 1995; Riddell et al, 2002). In addition, the employment policy has adapted the medical model, viewing individual impairment rather than social barriers as the main reason of unemployment of disabled people (Riddell et al, 2002; Roulstone, 2003; Hyde, 2000). Roulstone et al (2003: 3) note that 'The Act remains limited in the recruitment arena, is reactive, has failed to link legal interventions with the Access to Work scheme and offers a severe legal test very few disabled complainants can pass.' Barnes and Roulstone (2005: 322) suggest that 'Where legislation is currently being considered, again governments must make the appropriate arrangements to ensure enforcement commissions are properly in place'.

The *benefit system* is one of the main barriers to employing disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties because they are afraid of losing state benefits (Beyer et al, 2004; Corden, 2005; Schneider and Wistow, 2004; Bates, 2003; Stanley, 2005; Simons, 1998; Norouzi, 2003b, 2004c; Roulstone, 2004). Hence:

¹³ It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person in respect of recruitment, terms of employment, promotion, transfer, and training, any other benefit and dismissal, or to subject them to any other detriment (see DfEE, 1996, paragraphs 4.1 to 4.11; DRC, 2004: paragraph 3.18). The reluctance of the employers to employing people with learning difficulties exists while discriminating against disabled people in employment, has been unlawful since the Disability Discrimination Act came into force in 1995. In relation to recruitment, the Act (DRC, 2004: paragraph 3.18) says, 'It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person in the arrangements made for determining who should be offered employment; in the terms on which the disabled person is offered employment, or by refusing to offer, or deliberately not offering, the disabled person employment'.

I wanted off benefit but it was far from easy. We had learned how to live or at least get by on the amount that I got on the sick, so to go off it was a big risk. What if the family was worse off? It is the fear of the unknown you're gambling with the very basis of your life (a disabled person quoted in Heenan, 2002: 391)

Gosling and Cotterill (2000) argue that the present benefit system works against people with learning difficulties getting paid jobs. Beyer et al (2004: 21-22) and Roulstone et al (2003: 38) argue that the current benefit system does not let people with learning difficulties working more than 16 hours earn more than £20 per week. If they earn more, they would lose some parts of their benefit and also some 'linked benefit' such as Housing Benefit. This is worse for people living in residential home care¹⁴ and also people receiving different benefits such as IS, HB and CTB (O'Bryan et al, 2000; Beyer et al, 2004).

In gaining any job, having sufficient levels of educational achievement, vocational skills, work experience and personal characteristics are essential (Aston et al, 2005; PMSU, 2005). Smits (2004: 661) argues that education is a precondition to employment (see also PMSU, 2005: 39). In this regard, 'schools and colleges have an important role in providing an education for people with learning disabilities that will enable them to develop the skills needed for work' (Beyer et al, 2004: 4). The day centres also provide some training in employment-related skills¹⁵ by providing work experiences for people with learning difficulties (Beyer et al, 2004).

Low educational qualifications and less labour market experience for disabled people would reduce the chance of them being in employment (PMSU, 2005; Beyer et al, 2003; Barnes et al, 1998; Prescott Clarke's, 1990; Meager et al, 1998). Beyond the workplace, segregated education is one of the factors which contributes to the social isolation of disabled people (Burchardt, 2000); and may impact upon the achievement of qualifications obtained by disabled pupils (Jolly, 2000). Low educational achievement is reported as a principle barrier to the gaining of employment by some disabled people (Loumidis et al, 2001; PMSU, 2005), because qualifications clearly

¹⁴ "People in residential care are systematically disadvantaged, since the need to retain their entitlements to relevant benefits effectively deters them from working for more than the Income Support disregard and so they can only earn £20 in addition to their benefit, even if they are capable of earning more"(Beyer et al, 2004: 76).

¹⁵ There were a number of employment-related training packages offered through day centres, such as "dressing for interviews and practising interviews; communication, getting on with people at work, use of telephones; food hygiene, food technology and health and safety at work; working in retail outlets; use of computers; numeracy, literacy, telling the time, handling money; and travel skills" (Beyer et al, 2004: 57).

play an important role in the labour market and a lack of qualifications severely reduces the chance of gaining employment (Tomlinson, 1996 and; Woodward et al, 2003). Burchardt notes (cited in Roulstone, 2004: 197) that qualifications improve the chances of disabled people in employment. Tomlinson (1996) reported that two fifths of people with learning difficulties have no vocational qualification. In order to improve their qualifications, providing adequate training is important. This would result in an improvement of the quality of life for people with learning difficulties in the community (Horny & Kidd, 2001: 10).

Providing support for disabled people before and after transition into employment is very important (PMSU, 2005; Burchardt, 2000) because unavailability of employment support is one of the employment barriers for people with learning difficulties. Supporting disabled people at work is essential to maintain their employment because the risk of losing employment among disabled people is higher than any non-disabled people (Beyer et al, 2004; Burchardt, 2000). Wilson (2003: 103) argued, 'The commitment to long-term support from a job coach, to enable people to enter and sustain employment is often impossible, with the result that service providers and more crucially Local Enterprise Companies are reluctant to commit funding to individuals 'unlikely', in their opinion, to be able to sustain 'normal employment'. AfSE also noted (cited in Wilson 2003: 103) that a lack of consistency of suitable supported employment through a funding problem was one of the employment barriers.

Transport problems are another barrier to work and to participation in society for disabled people (PMSU, 2005; Loumidis et al, 2001; Ashworth et al, 2003; Beyer et al, 2003; Wills et al, 1993; Burchardt, 2000), particularly those with learning difficulties living far away from the workplace (Norouzi, 2003b, 2004c; Beyer et al, 2004). Wilson (2003: 109) reported that in his study, one person with learning difficulties had transport problems and was continually late for work as he was reluctant to use public transport and had too far to walk. Whilst most people with learning difficulties went to work independently (Reid & Bray, 1998), travelling on the bus was reported as difficult for a person with learning difficulties (PMSU, 2005). Hence, 'travelling on the bus wasn't so easy...because sometimes the bus went right past him at the bus stop and on several occasions he had to walk home' (one person with learning difficulties cited in Reid & Bray, 1998: 235).

Physical barriers in the work environment discourage the employment of disabled people (Russell, 2002). Beyer et al (2004) argue that some occupations like catering and

cleaning assistant could bring with them negative environmental factors, such as noise and mess. Then, people with learning difficulties would not be interested in working in those conditions. For example, Lisa Watkins (cited in Norouzi, 2004b) states 'I left that job because I really didn't like it. It wasn't a very nice job. I didn't like the smells of the working environment with elderly people'.

Individual barriers

Some researchers highlight that people with learning difficulties are unemployed or have low wages because of some individual barriers caused by their individual impairments. Thomson et al (1995: 336) reported that in their study, one of the participants with Down's syndrome engaged in a repetitive and low level activity because of the severe nature of her learning difficulties. Similarly, Pannell and Simons (2000: 16) reported that one of the supported employment agency's staff argued that the reason for working people with learning difficulties being in sheltered employment was because they were unable to live independently and to look after themselves outside working hours. Simons (1998) also mentioned some learning problems of people with learning difficulties when training skills. Hence:

Training someone with learning disabilities to do a task in one environment does not necessarily mean they would be able to do something similar in a different environment; by definition, people who have difficulty learning will probably have trouble transferring or generalising skills (Simons, 1998: 15).

In addition, the health problem and disability was reported as the most common barrier to work for some disabled people (PMSU, 2005; Ashworth et al, 2003; Woodward et al, 2003; Martin et al cited in Roulstone, 2003: 4). Two-fifths (41 per cent) of the disabled respondents in Loumidis et al study (2001: 9-10) felt that they were 'too sick or disabled' to work. Similarly, Wilson (2003: 110) reported some memory problems of a worker with learning difficulties at work, 'Gary in his main duty of cleaning the factory yard he would sweep rubbish into perhaps 20 molehill-sized piles, but then forget to sweep up each pile into a bin with the result that the yard was often untidy...he was unable to remember which soaps went in which containers in the washrooms (there were a variety of soaps depending on which materials workers were using)'. Wilson (2003: 109) also reported that a worker with learning difficulties lost her job because she was unable to pass her induction:

She failed her induction programme on the basis of being unable to fully complete three essential aspects: understanding health and safety routines; accurate recording of training modules; customer care in terms of routines for dealing with problematic scenarios.

Burchardt (2000) reported that the proportion of non-disabled people who make a transition into employment is six times more than disabled people. This is because some disabled people *do not wish to move into employment*. They do not want a paid job (Martin et al cited in Roulstone, 2003: 4). For disabled people who are currently working, satisfaction with the job increased the chances of staying in work. On the other hand, dissatisfaction led to increased chances of leaving work (Ashworth et al, 2003; Beyer et al, 2004).

A lack of confidence about working is one of the employment barriers for disabled people (Woodward et al, 2003). It is also identified by disabled workers as a significant employment barrier: 'loss of confidence is a key factor for many people in being able to get and keep work' (Beyer et al, 2003: 40). Beyer argued (cited in Wilson, 2003: 103) the importance of the nature of the relationship of the person with 'learning difficulties' to their co-worker was dependant on self-confidence and self-esteem.

One of the important factors that lead to people with mental retardation losing their jobs in the USA is *a lack of appropriate social skills* (Rusch, 1992). She argues that in securing and maintaining employment, people with 'mental retardation' need to gain behaviours 'production skills and effective social skills' (p. 405). Without adequate skills in these areas, people with mental retardation are likely to encounter difficulty in finding and maintaining a job.' Similarly, Beyer et al (2004: 53) assert that people with learning difficulties need to get and to improve their social skills, 'such as communication, understanding the norms of behaviour within the workforce and not going over any line of acceptability or appropriateness'. Bailey (2004) also reported lack of skills and experience of disabled people as barriers.

Some evidence shows that some workers with learning difficulties left their jobs because of dissatisfaction from the job or workplace (Ashworth et al, 2003), 'company closure, sickness, being sacked, being unable to cope physically with the demands of the job, being withdrawn from the support services and because they no longer liked their job or the people they worked with' (Beyer et al, 2004: 34).

It making the distinction between structural and individual factors it is worth noting that all structural factors can affect the individual factors or vice versa since they interact. For example, as a result of the negative attitudes of policy makers and service providers

towards people with learning difficulties, they are denied their right to adequate education in childhood. So, for example, segregated education affects the people with whom they interact as well as educational outcomes and success in accessing employment at a later date. Then, as a result of inadequate education for this group, their level of education and their qualifications remain low. In addition to low qualification, the self-confidence and self-esteem of people with learning difficulties are influenced by inadequate education. Therefore, when people with learning difficulties want to work in the future, the employer views this group as 'unable to work' as a result of their low qualification and education. In fact, the employers are then likely to blame the low qualifications of people with learning difficulties on their individual impairment. Finally the employers' negative attitudes caused by their low awareness of the ability of people with learning difficulties marginalised this group from employment. The structural/individual distinction is therefore an heuristic. The two provide a means of understanding the multiple affects of policy, practice and experience. Disaggregating the structural or individual as distinct measurable factors is therefore highly problematic. However, examining their nature and the ways in which they interact provides a means of both describing and explaining the lives and outcomes for people with learning difficulties in the employment market.

Ways of overcoming employment barriers

The literature indicates several ways in which people with learning difficulties overcome employment barriers. I have divided these into two main categories: individual and structural.

Individual elements: Solving individual barriers helps to overcome employment barriers for people with learning difficulties. This can be achieved by improving vocational training and providing adequate training for people with learning difficulties (Kitchin et al, 1998; Baynes & Dyson, 1994; Greenbaum et al, 1996; Bass & Drewett, 1996); improving 'personal, social, practical, and cognitive skills'¹⁶ in order to become

¹⁶ Personal skills, such as adaptability, responsibility and risk awareness. Social skills, such as communication, understanding the norms of behaviour within the workforce and not going over any line of acceptability or appropriateness. Practical skills, such as basic literacy and numeracy and skills specifically related to the job (the latter were seen by some as a prerequisite to employment). Cognitive skills, such as concentration and the ability to learn. An ability to recognise and adhere to the routines and rules of a working environment, including punctuality and discipline (Beyer et al, 2004: 53).

employed (Beyer et al, 2004:53); providing work experience because the majority of people with learning difficulties who had no work experience were unable to find jobs and those who had participated in work experience at either school or college had managed to find jobs (Phelps and Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). Kidd and Hornby (1993) and Thomson et al (1995) reported that work experience is very helpful in getting a job. In this regard, connecting between work experience and the school or college curriculum is essential (Benz and Lindstrom, 1997).

Structural elements: Solving structural barriers also help overcome employment barriers for people with learning difficulties. Increasing disability awareness of employers (Roulstone et al, 2003; Beyer et al, 2004), and; giving advice to employers, managers, disabled workers, colleagues, and Jobcentre Plus staff would help disabled people to reduce barriers at work and make employment successful (Roulstone et al, 2003: 30-5). In this regard, Aston et al (2005: 85) argue that Job Brokers were successful in changing the attitudes of employers/managers towards employing disabled people; changing the culture of the Employment Service, moving away from assessing what people cannot do, towards discovering what they could do with help (O'Bryan et al, 2000); increasing income support disregard, increasing support at work, providing enough information about employment for people with learning difficulties and employers at work, facilitating the transition from education to employment, and providing opportunities for work skills training and preparation (Beyer et al, 2004: 76-7).

In addition, some researchers have argued that changing the current benefits system based on a concept of incapacity to a flexible benefit system which makes easier the transition of people with learning difficulties to work in the labour market will be essential (Roulstone et al, 2003: 38; Burchardt, 2000a; Corden, 2005; Bates, 2003; Gosling & Cotterill, 2000; Ashworth et al, 2003). Insecurity and uncertainty of the benefit system contribute directly to increased dependency of people with learning difficulties and having a secure and certain system is essential because it would encourage people with learning difficulties to gain paid work (Simons, 1998). Hence:

The important point of principle is that people should not be financially penalised if they need to return to benefits after attempting a period in work or training (Disablement Income Group quoted in Simons, 1998: 61).

In addition, consolidation of incapacity and in-work benefits into a single income maintenance benefit to ease transition into work; inclusion of supported employment in wider programmes, including the New Deal, welfare to work and economic regeneration strategies are important ways of overcoming employment barriers (JRF research, 1998). Disabling barriers which prevent disabled people from being fully included in society need to be actively addressed by government. 'Without action, existing behaviours, attitudes and structures will continue to marginalise disabled people' (PMSU, 2005: 50-51).

Conclusion

This chapter explored the existing literature on employment for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties. This suggests that the majority of people with learning difficulties were unemployed or work in very poor circumstances in England. My personal experiences in Chapter Two also showed that most people with learning difficulties were unemployed and there were no desirable employment opportunities for them in Iran.

The literature which was explored in this chapter was related to the nature of employment for disabled people in general and there was a little research on the real employment experiences of people with learning difficulties, particularly after *the 2001 White Paper, Valuing People*. This chapter also indicated that the negative attitude of employers towards disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties was one of the key barriers to their employment. The employment legislation, policies and programmes, particularly the SEP and its activities in support of people with learning difficulties in getting jobs, were explored in this chapter.

The literature and my personal experiences identified and raised many issues and questions around the employment of people with learning difficulties. What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of post-Valuing People? How are people with learning difficulties experienced and perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces? How do supported employment providers promote 'meaningful work' opportunities for people with learning difficulties? How can the findings from this thesis contribute to the promotion of the participation of people with learning difficulties in Iranian society?

These questions will be explored through considering the epistemological stance of my research in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: The epistemological stance of the research

Introduction

This chapter grounds my research in a theoretical stance that allowed me to approach my research question in ways that interrogate the environmental, physical, social, structural, political, historical and cultural aspects of employment and the lives of people with learning difficulties. In this chapter, the individual (medical) model of disability in which the nature of disability and impairment are interpreted in terms of individual impairment will be firstly outlined. Secondly, some limitations of the model will be discussed. Thirdly, the social model of disability and its limitations will be discussed. The experiences of people with learning difficulties will be considered in the light of the social model which often ignores their interests. Finally, the social model of learning difficulties which is one part of the social disability perspective will be justified as the main stance of this research and a model of my research journey will be explained.

The individual model of disability

The individual model of disability has dominated policy and practice regarding disabled people for many years (Baron et al, 1999). As Barton (1998: 56) notes,

Official definitions powerfully influenced by medical and psychological concerns and interests, often enshrined in legislation and taken up in a populist discourse increasingly influenced by mass media images, have been used to define disabled people negatively.

In the individual model, disabled people have variously been identified as ‘cripple’, ‘spastic’, and ‘idiot’ (Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 17), ‘unfortunate’ (Hunt, 1966; Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 9), ‘oppressed’, and ‘sick’ (Hunt, 1966: 17), and ‘deformed’, ‘mentally handicapped’ and ‘subnormal’ (Barton, 1998: 56). According to this model, disability is interpreted as a personal tragedy (Oliver, 1990, 1996, 1998). Therefore, disabled people’s problems stem from their sickness (Hunt, 1966), and personal

limitation (Skrtic, 1995), and they are rejected from ordinary life, and 'their experiences are devalued by society' (Hunt, 1966: 18).

The discourse on disability and the terminology used to refer to disabled people have changed over time and have, arguably, become more 'positive' (Barnes and Mercer, 2003). In this regard, the World Health Organization (WHO) produced an International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) in 1980. This classification identified impairment, disability and handicap in the line of the medical model as:

Impairment: Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function...

Disability: Any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being...

Handicap: A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role (depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors) for that individual.

(WHO, 1980: 29 quoted in Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 13)

Later, the ICIDH was criticised by disabled people's organisations.

'First, the approach relies primarily on medical definitions and uses a bio-physiological definition of 'normality'...Second, 'impairment' is identified as the cause of both 'disability' and 'handicap.' This privileges medical and allied rehabilitative and educational interventions in the treatment of social and economic disadvantages...Third, the ICIDH represents the environment as 'neutral' and ignores the extent to which disabling social, economic and cultural barriers are significant in the social exclusion of people with impairments' (Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 14-15).

WHO changed the first classification to ICIDH2. As a result, the ICIDH2 retained the concept of impairment in body function and structure, replaced 'disability' with activities, and 'handicap' with participation. In addition, ICIDH-2 assumes that functioning, activity and participation are influenced by a myriad of environmental factors, both material and social (Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 15).

Oliver (1996: 31) emphasises two important points for the individual model of disability...'Firstly, it locates the 'problem' of disability within the individual. Secondly, it sees the causes of this problem as stemming from the functional limitations or psychological losses which are assumed to arise from disability' (Oliver, 1996: 32). In the individual model, impairment was largely considered as a personal tragedy affecting unfortunate individuals and their families (Dyer, 1996; and Oliver, 1990,

1996). In this regard, the only way to avoid impairment as a personal tragedy was to hope for a cure (Dewsbury et al, 2004; Mason & Rieser, 1990; and Oliver, 1996, 1998).

Searching for a cure and receiving treatment to improve the condition meant that disabled people were often 'handed over' to institutions where they spent their whole lives (Mason and Rieser, 1990). In this way, theoretically, disabled people 'for their own benefit' were kept within institutions and were excluded from mainstream society (Horwood, 1988). In addition, the idea that 'doctors know best' (Dyer, 1996; and Schein cited in Skrtic, 1995: 90) was so strong that families giving up their disabled children for 'treatment' believed they were giving their disabled children the only opportunity of life (Dyer, 1996). The idea that the institution was the only option for disabled people increased the number of disabled people who were living in homecare. Disabled people, consequently, were isolated in the segregated institutions and excluded from mainstream society (Barnes & Mercer, 2003).

Some disabled people, living in institutions have experienced harassment and abuse. Hunt (1966: 154), for example, describes 'staff who bully those who can't complain, who dictate what clothes people should wear, who switch the television off in the middle of a programme, and will take away 'privileges' (like getting up for the day) when they choose'. The experiences of disabled people in residential care indicated that the segregated institutions were not a suitable option because they did not develop disabled people's skills towards independence. Institutions also increased their dependence on care staff in many aspects of their everyday lives (Armstrong, 2004; Miller & Gwynne, 1972; Goffman, 1961; Humphries & Gordon, 1992). From the second half of the twentieth century, 'the circumstances of the segregated institutions attracted growing criticism, both from disabled people and their organisations and from mainstream providers, academics and politicians leading towards closing large, residential institutions and transferring disabled people to living 'in the community' (Barnes & Mercer, 2003: 35-6). Despite closing many large institutions and moving disabled people into 'living in the community', most disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties were isolated from mainstream life because as Barnes and Mercer (2003: 37) argue, 'the transition to living in the community was also accompanied by a reassertion of rehabilitation and caring goals by those working in the 'human care industries'.

The individual model can be challenged for the way in which it depicts disability as personal tragedy. Disability needs to be considered in a different way because the

activity and participation of disabled people in society, as Barnes and Mercer (2003: 15) argued, are influenced by many environmental factors.

Criticism of the individual model of disability

The individual model of disability has been criticised for the way in which it views disabled people as somehow ‘lacking’, unable to play a ‘full role’ in society (Dewsbury et al, 2004: 147). It also has been criticised for the way it views the medical treatment of disability. This model, based on the functionalist theory which views disability as personal tragedy (Oliver, 1990, 1996), and individual pathology (Skrtic, 1995), emphasises ‘medicine’s role to cure and to maintain the ‘normal’ functioning of individuals and of society’ (Oliver, 1998: 1448).

Why is disability often viewed in this way? Oliver (1996) rejects the treatment of disablement as personal tragedy and argues that the medical model is problematic. He (cited in Thomas, 2004: 25) emphasises that ‘disability is wholly and exclusively social...disablement has nothing to do with the body...disability as a long-term social state is not treatable medically and is certainly not curable.’ Thus:

The medical profession, because of its power and dominance, has spawned a whole range of pseudo-professions in its own image; physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, clinical psychology; each one geared to the same aim – the restoration of normality. And each one of these pseudo-professions develops its own knowledge base and set of skills to facilitate this. They organise their interventions and intrusions into disabled people’s lives on the basis of discreet and limited knowledge and skills. The reality, of course, is that disabled people’s lives cannot be divided up in this way to suit professional activity and increasingly, disabled people, individually and collectively, are coming to reject the prescriptions of the ‘normalising’ society and the whole range of professional activities which attempt to reinforce it (Oliver, 1996: 37).

The individual model of disability has also been criticised because it excludes disabled people from participation in mainstream society. Disability is believed to be an individual matter of personal tragedy or heroic success over difficulty. Therefore, disabled people are excluded from society. They are denied ordinary education, employment, access to buildings, public transport, and other things (Oliver, 1998: 1448).

The individual model has impacted upon policy. For example, as was noted in Chapter Three, the social security benefit system was established based on an assumption that disabled people were incapable of working. This was consistent with a 'personal tragedy' view of disability. The individual model also has impacted upon the educational and employment opportunities of disabled people. This has been largely through its interpretation of disability based on the functionalist theory which views the problem of disabled people pathologically (Skrtic, 1995); as 'personal limitations' (Oliver, 1996: 22), or as 'something wrong with them' (Oliver, 1998: 1448). The individual model also does not recognise that cultural and economical factors create social problems for disabled people (Oliver, 1998, 1996). There is a lot of literature to show that most policies and practices for disabled people in society have failed because they have been based on an individual rather than a social model of disability (Oliver, 1983, 1990). Disabled people's needs were also marginalised by this model (Borsay, 1986).

Goodley (2003: 106) argues that two types of cultural spaces are inhabited by people with learning difficulties in Western capitalism: disabling culture, and disability culture. He argues that 'disabling culture posits disability and impairment as synonyms and is founded upon an individual model of disability' (p. 106-7). Zetlin and Turner (cited in Goodley, 2003: 107) note that 'the dominating culture for people with learning difficulties throughout the twentieth century has been one of institutionalisation and exclusion'. In this regard, Goodley (2003: 107) emphasises that in the second part of the twentieth century, policy developments, have appeared to confront 'the cultural 'need' to exclude people with learning difficulties from mainstream culture'.

The individual approach to disability deals with disability research with the consideration of the personal tragedy rather than the socio-political and cultural conditions. In this regard, as a researcher who favours the social model of disability I wanted to consider: What socio-political and cultural factors affect employment for people with learning difficulties? How do the attitudes of society affect employment for people with learning difficulties? What are the experiences and qualifications of people with learning difficulties?

The individual model would emphasise that all social barriers for disabled people are as a result of their personal tragedy. Therefore, in answering the above questions the individual model would consider the personal tragedy rather than the socio-political, cultural and structural factors within society. So, in this study, in understanding the

socio-political and cultural conditions of disablement, the social model of disability and its limitations will be introduced. The experiences of people with learning difficulties within the social model and in relation to work and employment will be considered.

The social model of disability

In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore, an oppressed group in society (UPIAS 1976, p. 14 quoted in Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 11).

The social model of disability 'has had a significant impact on social research that engages with the experiences of people with physical and sensory impairments' (Chappell et al, 2001: 45). The social model of disability was first emphasised through the writings of Paul Hunt in 1966 and then developed by disabled academics (Barnes et al, 1999; Finkelstein, 1980; Brisenden, 1998; Abberley, 1987; Oliver, 1990, 1996; and Barnes, 1991, 1996). Paul Hunt (1966) openly challenged the status quo by making public the experiences of exclusion as a result of impairment. By stating that impairment was not the most unfortunate aspect of his life, but rather that it was the denial of the material and social benefits open to the majority, such as marriage and having children, Hunt placed the emphasis on impairment being an ordinary part of the human experience and so positioned the 'problem' as lying within socio/cultural fears surrounding impairment and leading to disablement. Hunt argued that impairment itself did not mean that he was intrinsically useless but rather, he was rendered apparently useless because he could not easily contribute to the economy.

In 1976, a decade after Hunt's writing (1966), the social model was developed by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) which clarified the distinction between impairment and disablement with the following definition:

Impairment: Lacking part of or all of a limb or having defective limb organism or mechanism of the body.

Disability: The disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream social activities (UPIAS, 1976: 3-4, quoted in Barnes and Mercer 2003: 11).

As Barnes et al (cited in Chappell et al, 2001: 46) argued recently, 'this definition of impairment has been broadened to include sensory, and 'intellectual' or

‘developmental’ impairments’. People with impairments are disabled by a society that excludes, disadvantages and discriminates against them (UPIAS cited in Chappell et al, 2001: 46). The idea of the individual and social model was taken from the distinction between disability and impairment made by UPIAS (Oliver, 1996: 30-1). Finkelstein (cited in Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 11-12) notes that this distinction enables the construction of a ‘social model’ or ‘social barriers’ of disability.

In the individual model, ‘disability’ is attributed to personal tragedy whereas the social model interprets it as the ‘outcome of social barriers and power relations, rather than an inescapable biological destiny’ (Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 12). In the social model, the social barriers within society rather than the individual’s impairment were expressed as the source of disability (Oliver, 1996). Thus,

An inability to walk is an impairment, whereas an inability to enter a building because the entrance is up a flight of steps is a disability. An inability to speak is an impairment but an inability to communicate because appropriate technical aids are not made available is a disability. An inability to move one’s body is an impairment but an inability to get out of bed because appropriate physical help is not available is a disability (Morris, 1993b quoted in Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 12).

The social model of disability indicates that disability is derived from the ‘socially constructed attitudinal, physical, and structural barriers created by the dominant ideology of disablist society, rather than an individual’s intellectual, physical or sensory impairment’ (Gillman et al, 2000: 393). In this model, disability is ‘socially constructed.’ The problem is a lack of appropriate services for disabled people not the ‘disabled people’ themselves (Dewsbury et al, 2004). The social model is a deliberate attempt to switch the focus away from the functional limitations of impaired individuals onto the problems caused by disabling environments, barriers and cultures (Barnes & Roulstone, 2005: 319). Learning from disabled people’s experiences to understand meanings of disability is very important in this model (Oliver, 1998: 1448). For example:

A wheelchair user is disabled when a building does not have ramp access.
A deaf person is disabled if a services provider does not provide a minicom for them to access that service (Dewsbury et al, 2004: 148).

Therefore, if society provides adequate services for a wheelchair user he/she would not have any difficulty in accessing the building and would effectively cease being disabled. The literature on the social model of disability emphasises that the problems of disability are societal rather than individual problems (Oliver, 2004; Barnes & Mercer,

2003; Goodley, 2003, 2004; Thomas, 2004; Hughes, 2004; Roulstone, 2004; Sapey, 2004; and Barton, 2004).

The individual model identified disabled people as economically problematic because they are not competitive workers (Abberley, 1987: 116; Oliver cited in Chappell et al, 2001: 46). The social model does not reject the individual reality of the impairment (Roulstone et al, 2003: vi), but argues that disablement has nothing to do with the body and it is caused by social oppression (Oliver cited in Thomas, 2004: 25).

Among disabled people, those with learning difficulties are the most socially oppressed group in society (Goodley, 2003; Atkinson & Walmsley, 1999). They have experienced exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (Young cited in Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 21). The voice of people with learning difficulties is frequently ignored and severely devalued in society (Goble, 2004: 44).

Regarding the exclusion of people with learning difficulties from mainstream employment, this research will be conducted to argue that their exclusion is not because of their individual pathology (intellectual impairments), but because of the socio-political and cultural barriers within society. As Goodley (2004: 123) argues, the key aspiration of the social model of disability is 'to understand and change disabling socio-political and cultural practices'. Thus:

It is society that has to change, not individuals and this change will come about as part of a process of political empowerment of disabled people as a group and not through social policies and programmes delivered by establishment politicians and policy makers nor through individualised treatments and interventions provided by the medical and para-medical professions (Oliver, 1996: 37).

Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD) (cited in Finkelstein, 2004: 17) notes that the social model of disability gives disabled people the words to describe their experiences of inequality, and to understand what needs to happen in order that they can access their human and civil rights. It is clear that the social model of disability had powerful effects on the lives of disabled people and, as Goodley (2004: 118) argued, the social model 'holds the potential for the inclusion of all disabled people and disabled activists'. However, the social model has been criticised. Some of the social model's dilemmas will be discussed in the following section.

Limitations of the social model of disability

The social model has been criticised by some professionals, disabled people and their organisations. Oliver (1996, 2004) identifies five critical points in the social model of disability.

Firstly, the social model ignores or is unable to deal adequately with the realities of impairment... Secondly, our subjective experiences of the 'pains' of both impairment and disability are ignored by the social model...Thirdly, it is unable to incorporate other social divisions, that is, race, gender, ageing, sexuality and so on...Fourthly, the social model centres on the issue of 'otherness'. It argues that it's not the physical and environmental barriers that we face, but the way our cultural values position disabled people as other'...Fifthly, the social model is inadequate as a social theory of disablement (Oliver, 2004: 8-9).

Oliver (1996: 41-2) argues that the social model 'is not a social theory of disability and, it cannot do the work of social theory' to explain everything. In addition, Crow (cited in Riddell and Watson, 2003: 4) emphasises that the personal experiences of impairment seem to be less important in the social model. She argues that 'the personal experience of impairment had been downplayed because acknowledging individual pain and oppression did not necessarily accord with the view that disability was entirely a product of social barriers'. Moreover, Shakespeare (1994: 283) has criticised the social model and argues that 'impairment and imagery are neglected within the social model of disability'. He emphasises that a lack of writings from the social model theorists on cultural imagery stems from the neglect of impairment. Thus:

If the social model analysis seeks to ignore, rather than explore, the individual experience of impairment (be it blindness, short stature or whatever), then it is unsurprising that it should also gloss over cultural representation of impairment, because to do otherwise would be to potentially undermine the argument (Shakespeare, 1994: 283-284).

Furthermore, the social model has been criticised by some researchers in the way in which it has and continues to neglect marginalised people with learning difficulties (Chappell, 1998; Chappell et al, 2001; Humphrey, 2000; and Gobel, 2004). A significant question remains: Is there any place in the social model for people with learning difficulties?

Is there any place in the social model for people with learning difficulties?

Humphrey (2000: 68) argues that people with learning difficulties have been restricted from contribution by other disabled people in the social model and that this 'may be because they speak with a different voice'. The social model is characterised by some researchers as helping and supporting those with learning difficulties for inclusion in all aspects of their everyday lives. However, the evidence suggests that they are neglected by the social model (Chappell, 1998). Thus

The emergence of the social model of disability means that there exists a theoretical tool which could assist people with learning difficulties, not just in a struggle for better services (the primary concern of normalization) but for full economic, social and political inclusion in society...however now they are neglected by the social model of disability which ought to promise them so much in terms of its analysis of their experiences and its strategies for change (Chappell, 1998: 211).

Marginalization of people with learning difficulties in the social model is a very debatable point among the social model theorists. One of the important features of this marginalization is that there is very little writing from the social model theorists on people with learning difficulties. Hence

There is little usage of literature produced by writers concerned with learning difficulty to develop their arguments...the experiences of people with learning difficulties are generally omitted from much of the disability literature, even when those experiences are central to the arguments presented by the author (Chappell 1998: 213).

Firstly, the social model has been developed by people with physical and sensory impairment (Humphrey, 2000), and most academic writers who have written about disability, are physically or sensorily impaired like Mike Oliver, Jenny Morris, Sally French, Lois Keith, and Paul Abberley (Chappell, 1998).

Secondly, other disabled people in the social model may think that people with learning difficulties are treated differently because of their limited ability as a result of their intellectual impairment. People with learning difficulties are unable to recognise and to convey their experiences of discrimination (Chappell, 2000). Chappell (2000: 218) argues that many people with learning difficulties have articulated their experiences of discrimination, but their experiences have not been conveyed in the disability literature like people with physical or sensory impairments.

Finally, some people with learning difficulties perceive disabled identity as implying having physical impairments. Therefore, people with learning difficulties view themselves differently from this identity because they are not physically impaired (Chappell et al, 2001). Thus:

Learning disabilities- I don't like that, disability makes you believe that we are in wheelchairs and we can't do anything for ourselves, when we can. We've got jobs now, we've got paid jobs (Joyce Kershaw, self-advocate, quoted in Goodley, 2000: 229-30).

Despite the marginalisation of people with learning difficulties many researchers have argued that people with learning difficulties have made advances, particularly within the self-advocacy movement (Goodley, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2004; Chappell et al, 2001; Beart et al, 2004; and Simons, 1992). Self-advocacy plays a significant role in the lives of people with learning difficulties. It enables them to make choices, to make decisions and to control their everyday lives (Bourlet cited in Goodley, 2000: 6).

A self-advocacy group highlights how those with learning difficulties connect with the wider disability movement (Chappell et al, 2001) and provides 'a place in which self-advocacy can potentially be supported' (Goodley, 2000: 201). In this regard, self-advocacy is the way that people with learning difficulties would get the chance to recognise and to exercise their political rights (Goodley, 2000) and to convey their voices to others in society (Goodley, 2003).

The self-advocacy movement has been successful in many aspects, particularly in increasing the political resilience of people with learning difficulties. It allows and encourages them to 'speak out' for others. Self-advocacy is the way that the voice of people with learning difficulties will be heard by others. It helps those with learning difficulties to improve their skills for recognising and practicing their rights. It is clear that self-advocacy has a significant effect on the lives of people with learning difficulties. In this research, the life experiences of six adults with learning difficulties will in part be reviewed in terms of addressing the importance of self-advocacy and its effect on the lives of people with learning difficulties, particularly in relation to employment.

Towards a social model of learning difficulties: Identifying key area of analysis

The social model has been adopted as a clear framework for study by many people with physical and sensory impairments; not people with learning difficulties (Chappell et al, 2001: 45). However, can it be a suitable theoretical framework for researching and analysing the employment experiences of people with learning difficulties?

‘The separation of literature of the social model and literature associated with learning difficulties has created distinct ways of doing research’ (Chappell et al, 2001: 47). As is mentioned above, the social model of disability deliberately attempts ‘to switch the focus away from the functional limitations of impaired individuals onto the problems caused by disabling environment, barriers and cultures’ (Barnes & Roultsone 2005: 319). This research while considering some individual factors to employment of people with learning difficulties, tries to focus on investigating the socio-political and cultural barriers within society which has restricted and excluded people with learning difficulties from participation in social life and from gaining paid employment. In this regard, the study explores the employment experiences and perspectives of people with learning difficulties. The social model of learning difficulties will be justified as the main stance of this research, epistemologically.

. In understanding the epistemological stance of this research, the Burrell and Morgan (1979) epistemological model (cited in Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 138) and Priestley’s four approaches to disability theory (see Figure 4.1) will be pursued in this research (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1 Four approaches to disability theory (Priestley, 1998: 78)

	Materialist	Idealist
Individual	<p>Position 1</p> <p>Individual materialist models Disability is the physical product of biology acting upon the functioning of material individuals (bodies)</p> <p>The units of analysis are impaired bodies</p>	<p>Position 2</p> <p>Individual idealist models Disability is the product of voluntaristic individuals (disabled and non-disabled) engaged in the creation of identities and the negotiation of roles</p> <p>The units of analysis are beliefs and identities</p>
Social	<p>Position 3</p> <p>Social creationist models Disability is the material product of socio-economic relations developing within a specific historical context</p> <p>The units of analysis are disabling barriers and material relations of power</p>	<p>Position 4</p> <p>Social constructionist models Disability is the idealist product of societal development within a specific cultural context</p> <p>The units of analysis are cultural values and representations</p>

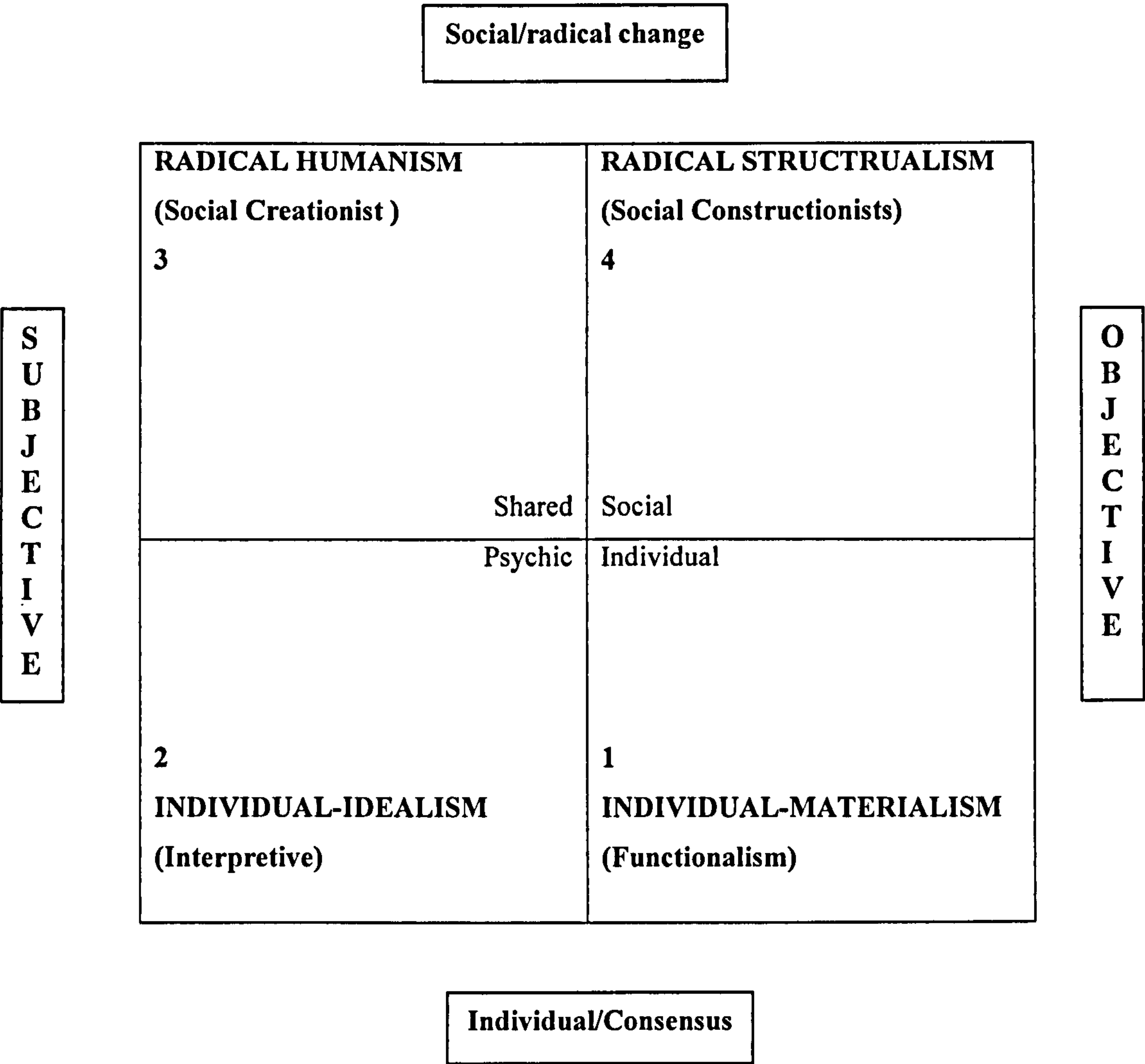


Figure 4.2 Epistemological model based on the Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) model and Priestley approaches (1998) quoted in Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 138 and Priestley’s approaches (1998: 78).

The above model has indicated four epistemological positions:

1. A functionalist view of the world sees society as regulated and ordered, promotes objective measures of (dys) functional mental states and behaviours and, inevitably, views disabled people as adherents of a ‘sick role’ (Barnes, 1998);
2. An interpretive stance understands the social world as an emergent social process, created by the individuals concerned and the sharing of subjective understandings and experiences. Crucial to this epistemology is the formation of disabling/enabling identities and attitudes between voluntaristic individuals in a coherent and regulated world (Ferguson et al, 1995);
3. Radical humanism situates knowledge production in the often elusive shared subjective creation of wider society. Meanings are imprisoned within ideological process and patterns of dominance but also produced by

resistant counter-hegemonic cultural practices and emergent community identities (see, for example, Marks, 1999);

4. Finally, a radical structuralist epistemology understands the social world as constantly in conflict, whose structures can be objectively observed and in which certain social groupings are always at risk of alienation, oppression and false consciousness. This stance is acutely connected with emancipatory aims. (Barnes, 1998; Oliver, 1990, 1996 quoted in Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 139)

Priestley (cited in Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 140) argues that social theorising around disability in British disability studies has moved away from functionalism to radical structuralism. In this regard, in theorising the current research about employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties, the Burrell and Morgan epistemological model and Priestley's approaches to disability theory (1998: 78) will be combined and used (see figure 2). Goodley and Lawthom (2005: 140) argue that this model prepares a way for making sense of the research process by exploring and tracing epistemological journeys that take place in the doing of research. The model is, therefore used to describe the epistemological position and to introduce and explain the methodology and methods of doing this research.

Epistemological positions and a model of my research journey

In this section, epistemological positions and a model of my research journey will be explained using Burrell and Morgan's epistemological model (1979 cited in Goodley & Lawthom), and Priestley's approaches to disability theory. See Figure 4.3:

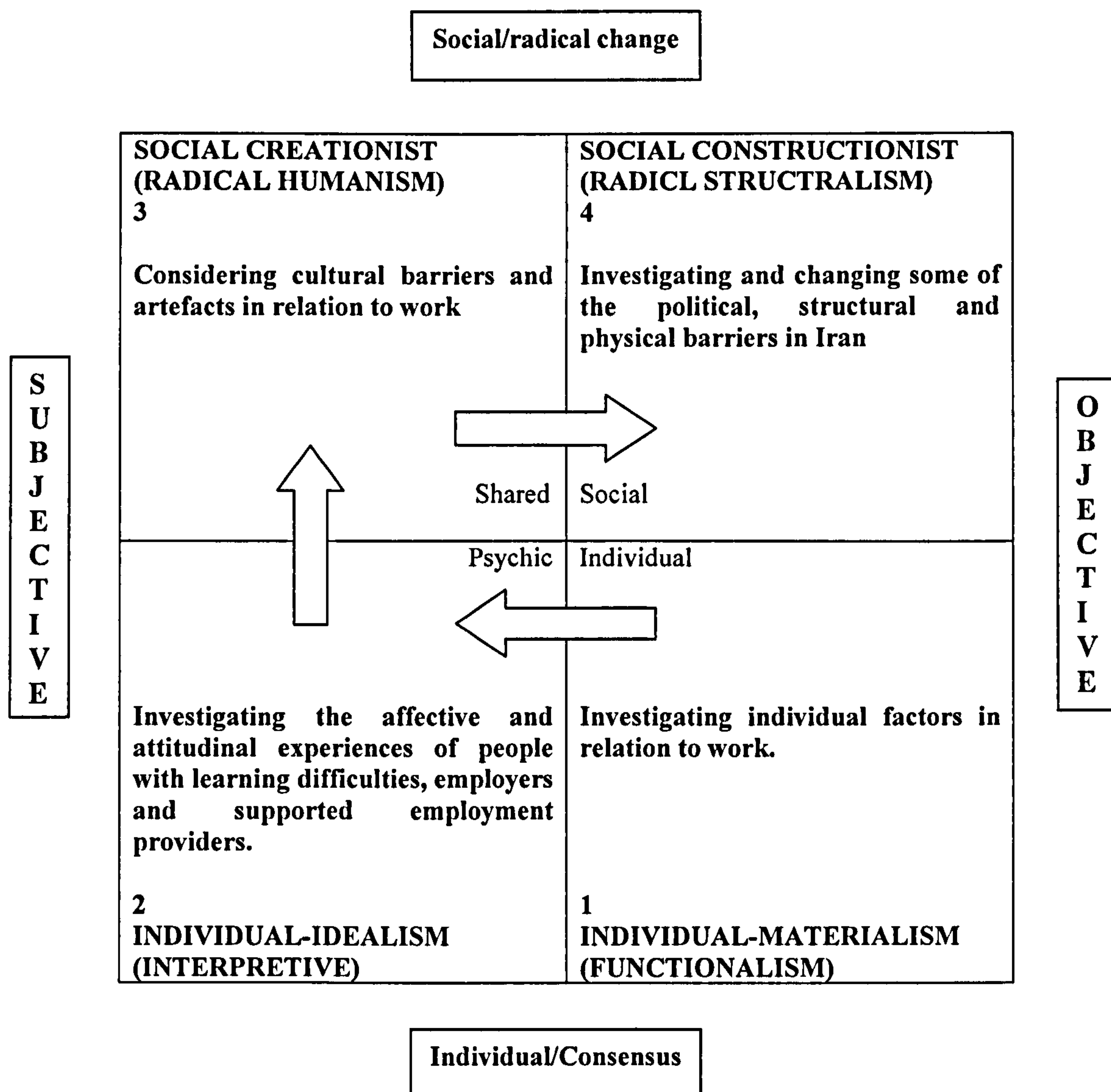


Figure 4.3 Epistemology and researching the employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties: a model of my research journey

Grounded on the Priestley model (see Priestley, 1998: 76-81) and Burrell and Morgans’ model (1979 cited in Goodley & Lawthom, 2005) the study begins by investigating individual factors which affected the employment of people with learning difficulties as indicated in position 1. In this position, individual-materialist (functionalism in Burrell & Morgan’s model, 1979) focuses on individual factors and views people with learning difficulties as ‘Incompetent Adults’ (Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 142), and ‘nothing more than retarded’ (Guskin cited in Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 141). There is an assumption that people with learning difficulties are unemployed or work in very poor circumstances because of their individual impairment (intellectual disability) which

portrays them as a group unable to work. The individual factors of people with learning difficulties in relation to work will be considered by asking some questions in survey questionnaires and interviews. From this position, the study immediately moves to position 2, individual-idealist (interpretivism in Burrell & Morgan's model, 1979), that focuses on cognitive interaction and the affective experiences of people with learning difficulties. Individual-idealism sees disability as the product of personal experience and the negotiation of social roles between individuals. The units of analysis are identity and experience (Priestley, 1998: 80). The study will be continued by investigating the affective and attitudinal experiences of people with learning difficulties, employers and supported employment providers. The first research question 'What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of post-Valuing People White Paper will be considered by doing six life stories and considering case files of 200 employees with learning difficulties. In addition, the real employment experiences of six workers will be investigated to see how the British government's objectives which are reported by the 2001 White Paper are implemented in relation to the employment of people with learning difficulties. The results that emerge from these methods will be presented in Chapter Seven.

I will also consider the experiences and perspectives of employers who are working with people with learning difficulties in mainstream workplaces to address the second research question, 'How are people with learning difficulties perceived and experienced by their employers in mainstream workplaces?' This research question will be answered by use of a survey questionnaire of 21 employers and 12 semi-structured interviews with these employers. The findings that emerge from these methods will be explored in Chapter Eight.

In addition, the experiences and perspectives of supported employment providers will be investigated to address the third question 'How do supported employment providers promote 'meaningful work' opportunities for people with learning difficulties. The experiences and perspectives of eight SEPs gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews and the results that emerge from these methods will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

The study, from position 2, moves to position 3, social creationist (Radical humanism in Burrell and Morgan's model), which views disability as a 'social construct—the idealist product of a society developing within a specific cultural context. The units of analysis are cultural representations' (Priestley, 1998: 81). It has

already been noted in Chapter Three that there were some cultural barriers to the employment of people with learning difficulties. I will consider cultural barriers and artefacts which exclude people with learning difficulties from gaining paid employment by investigating the experiences and perspectives of people with learning difficulties, employers and supported employment providers.

Finally, the study moves to position 4, social constructionist (radical structuralism in Burrell and Morgan's model, 1979), in which disability 'can be regarded as the material relations of power arising from the development of political economy and/or patriarchy within a specific historical context. The units of analysis are disabling barriers, mostly physical, structural or institutional' (Priestley, 1998: 80). The political, physical and structural barriers within society which prevent people with learning difficulties from gaining paid employment are considered by a review of the experiences and perspectives of people with learning difficulties, employers and supported employment providers. Then, critically, the disabling society is challenged by offering something to change the services for people with learning difficulties. The findings that emerged from research question 1, 2, and 3 will be considered in terms of how they could influence policy making, service provision and practice in Iran. Chapter Ten will explore the answer to the fourth research question.

Goodley and Lawthom (2005: 143) state that the social model of disability 'has understandably strong reliance on such an epistemological position'. The epistemological positions in this research will allow the researcher to understand the meaning of participants' lives, to analyse their experiences and perspectives (position 2, interpretive), to understand cultural barriers by valuing all participants' identities (position 3, the radical humanism), to challenge disabling society and to change the services for people with learning difficulties in society (position 4, radical structuralism).

In addition, the epistemological positions assist the researcher and participants to 'reconceptualise' (Goodley and Lawthom, 2005: 143) the employment problems of those with learning difficulties as cultural barriers (position 3, radical humanism) and social structures and environmental barriers (position 4, radical structuralism); not as intellectual impairment (position 1, functionalism).

As is mentioned above in the individual model of disability, people with learning difficulties are not seen as being capable of working due to their intellectual

impairment. It is clear that a small minority cannot work as a result of their impairment and need welfare care rather than social care. Hence:

Of disabled people who are economically inactive as a result of ill health or impairment:

- Some will need little support to enter full-time employment;
- For some, full-time employment is likely to be an option in the near future with some additional support or some intermediate stops in part-time work or in education and training;
- Some will be further from full-time employment or are unlikely to reach full-time employment at all and will require part-time or other types of employment and meaningful activity; and
- For a small minority no form of employment is ever likely to be practical (PMSU, 2005: 155-156)

It is also clear that among people with learning difficulties, those with severe impairment are unable to work and they would need welfare forever (PMSU, 2005). Some people are able to work but they do not like to work and have no motivation to work (PMSU, 2005). However, most of people with learning difficulties would like to work and to get paid employment (Roulstone, 2004; Norouzi, 2003a, 2004c; Pannell & Simons, 2000) even 'if they are not working at present' (Beyer et al, 2004: 71). Therefore, I will argue that most people with learning difficulties are able to work if they receive adequate support. In the later analysis chapters, firstly, I will explore the competency of employees with learning difficulties experienced by the employers and supported employment providers. Secondly, I will criticise the employment barriers for people with learning difficulties by emphasising that their unemployment is not because of their personal tragedy, but is because of several socio-cultural, political and structural barriers which exclude them from mainstream society.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the individual and social perspectives and their effects on the lives of disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties. There have been many debates between the individual and social models about disability and impairment. The individual model sees disability as an individual matter which stems from personal tragedy or individual impairment, and emphasises medicine's role to cure and to maintain the 'normal' functioning of individuals and of society. Therefore, this model created many practical implications for policies, education and employment which excluded disabled people from participation in mainstream society. However, the

social model views disability as social oppression and emphasises that the problem of disabled people stems from socio-political and cultural barriers which restricts disabled people from gaining their equal rights in mainstream society.

This chapter also has criticised the individual model and suggested that the individual model was not a suitable perspective to be the framework of my research. Then, in order to investigate the employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties and the effects of the socio-political and cultural elements on their employment, the social model of learning difficulties was introduced as the main theoretical stance of my research. This chapter also has explored the epistemological journeys that take place in the doing of this research.

As Roulstone et al (2003) have mentioned, regarding disabled people's daily employment experiences, there was little research, and those studies which were undertaken by other researchers in the last few decades, were quantitative. Roulstone et al (2003) have noted that those qualitative studies which focused on the experience of employment have largely been based on the medical model.' It is worth noting that some studies have been done by some researchers (Roulstone, 1998; Roulstone et al, 2003; French, 2001; Griffiths, 2001; Beyer et al, 2004; Simons, 1998; Pannell & Simons, 2000) about employment for disabled people which were adapted from a social model, but little attention had been paid to the employment experiences of people with learning difficulties. Therefore, in this research, I will consider the employment experiences of adults with learning difficulties, employers and supported employment providers by addressing four research questions which I explored above. In obtaining the answers to these research questions I will undertake qualitative research which will be described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: Methodology and methods

Introduction

This chapter discusses the sources from which I have obtained my data and describes the methods and methodology involved in collecting the data. In addition, it describes the research dilemmas I faced in conducting my project.

On the basis of my personal experience (described in Chapter Two), on the literature on employment opportunities for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties (detailed in Chapter Three), my epistemological positioning and a model of my research journey (explored in Chapter Four), I formulated the following research questions:

1. What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of post-Valuing People White Paper?
2. How are people with learning difficulties experienced and perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces?
3. How do supported employment providers promote ‘meaningful work’ opportunities for people with learning difficulties?
4. How can the findings from this thesis contribute to the promotion of the participation of people with learning difficulties in Iranian society? By this question, I will reflect upon the findings to explore possible contribution of the UK experience on overcoming employment barriers and promoting the employment of people with learning difficulties in Iran

In terms of methodology this study has taken a mixed, eclectic approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. These are described in the following sections (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Methods of data collection

Research Questions	Methods adopted and analytical framework used
1. What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of post-Valuing People White Paper?	Narratives (life stories) Observation Case files analysis Thematic analysis
2. How are people with learning difficulties experienced and perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces?	Semi-structured interview Survey questionnaires Thematic analysis
3. How do supported employment providers promote ‘meaningful work’ opportunities for people with learning difficulties?	Semi-structured interview Thematic analysis
4. How can the findings from this thesis contribute to the promotion of the participation of people with learning difficulties in Iranian society?	Analysis of the findings from question 1, 2 and 3

In view of these research questions, this chapter will be divided into the following sections:

- 1. Inside the lives of people with learning difficulties
- 2. Gathering the perspectives of employers and supported employment providers
- 3. From Northtown to Iran: Taking the findings further

Section 1: Inside the lives of people with learning difficulties

In this section, I will consider the first research question, ‘What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of post-Valuing People?’ By this I am not invoking positivist meanings of reality as ‘science is central to positivism because the scientific method is thought to be the only way to achieve the objectivity necessary to see the world as it really is’ (Skrtic, 1995: 9). The reality here is

‘a non rational undertaking, a form of cultural engagement that yields different kinds of socially constructed possible knowledge’s, depending on the paradigm that serves as the observers metatheoretical frame of reference’ (Skrtic, 1995: 20). This means that ‘the theoretical knowledge that grounds the reality of work is not objective knowledge about reality; it is subjective knowledge, a social construction based on a particular, historically situated frame of reference’ (p. 38). In this research, subjectivism is my favoured stance in considering the realities of work for people with learning difficulties, not objectivist point of view of the reality.

Here, methodology and method of data collection will be considered.

Methodology and methods of data collection

Researchers who study the lives of people with learning difficulties need to find the best ways possible to collect information about people with learning difficulties (Salvatori et al, 2003). Therefore, to address the first research question and to gain detailed qualitative insights about how people with learning difficulties experience work in the current climate of the post-Valuing People paper, I used **narrative inquiry**. I used a narrative approach in order to give voice to people who have been silenced (Goodley, 1996) and to access the lives of people with learning difficulties. In addition, in exploring the lives of people with learning difficulties, I took advantage of this approach because as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argued, narrative inquiry is one of the important approaches for studying ‘personal and social life’ of people. It is ‘a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience’ (p. 2). Thus:

Narrative inquiry refers to a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action... In the context of narrative inquiry, narrative refers to a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot (Polkinghorne quoted in Cole, 2002: 3).

Narrative allows people try to make their lives more understandable (Richardson, 1992). People by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives. Narrative researchers describe such lives. They collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998: 155). Narrative gives meaning to people’s lives. Through narrative, people ‘dream, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, doubt, plan, criticise, gossip, learn and love’ (Walker, 2004: 4). Clandinin and Connelly (1994:

425) compare narrative inquiry to the 'personal experience methods' and argue that researchers try to gain experience of their informants through narratives (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998).

Narrative takes different forms including life histories (Gillman et al, 1997; Goodley, 1996; Goodson and Sikes, 2001); life stories and 'storytelling' (Booth & Booth, 1996; Goodley, 1998, 2001; Plummer, 1995); autobiographical narrative (Atkinson, 1997; Atkinson & Walmsley, 1999); and poetry (Richardson, 1992). Narrative inquiries can be either one life history or auto/biography, or they can contain a number of case studies related to one particular subject (Cole, 2002). In this research I will touch upon the life stories/histories of six people with learning difficulties to consider their employment experiences. Hence:

The life story is the 'story we tell about our life'; the life history is a collaborative venture, reviewing a wider range of evidence. The life story teller and another (or others) collaborate in developing this wider account by interviews and discussions and by scrutiny of texts and contexts. The life history is the life story located within its historical contexts (Goodson quoted in Sikes, 1997: 16).

Through using life story research I involved the six informants in telling the story of their own lives (Atkinson, 2004) to give 'meaning to people's lives through the stories' (Didion cited in Goodley, 2000: 47). Hence:

Only in "the telling" both a speaker and a listener become implicit collaborators in giving meaning to that which is told. That is where interpretation comes in. We tell our stories to interpret our lives for other people. Upon hearing them, other people interpret our interpretations (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1995: 105).

In fact, in this research, the six informants and I collaborated in giving meaning to the experiences which they told (see Chapter Six and Seven). I explored their life experiences and perspectives by using a collaborative life story approach which, as Goodley (1998) argues, 'constitutes a method in which people with learning difficulties become involved in the telling of their own stories' (p. 124). As Ferguson and Ferguson (1995: 119) argue 'Interpretivism empowers devalued individuals and groups within our society by giving them a voice'. In this research, I empowered the informants to convey their voices to other people. For example, I empowered Robert Savage in giving his voice to others. His life story which entitled 'My Life, My Work and My Self-advocacy' has been published as a chapter (Norouzi & Savage, 2005) in a book. This chapter shows the fact that people with learning difficulties are able and have stories to

tell (sometimes in collaboration with some researcher). By this collaborative research, I wanted to argue that most non-disabled people have chosen not to listen to people with learning difficulties (Bogdan and Taylor, 1982). Some non-disabled people believe that people with learning difficulties have no ability for understanding or transferring their own experiences (Atkinson & Williams, 1990). Therefore, based on this assumption that people with learning difficulties are unable to convey their voices to others, Goodley (2000: 48) argues that in life stories research 'the perspectives of people with learning difficulties were often not represented'. Traditionally 'the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of parents, carers, and professionals' were presented in some life stories research (Whittemore et al cited in Goodley, 2000: 48).

The biographical fragments of the lives of people with learning difficulties in the past showed that their voices were lost because it seemed that they could not represent themselves (Atkinson & Walmsley, 1999), they may struggle with the spoken word too (Atkinson cited in Chappell, 2000: 41). In this century, 'the voice of people with learning difficulties have remained lost as other voices have been in the ascendant' (p. 204) because, they were seen as 'a menace to society' (p. 205). Gillman et al (1997) argues that in life history research for people with learning difficulties there is not information about the lived experience of these people and their voices were not represented in such writings. However, the use of personal testimonies of people with learning difficulties for research purposes is also a recent development (p. 211), and a number of studies have drawn on the real life experiences of people with learning difficulties in recent years (see Goodley, 1996, 2000, 2000a, 2004; Goodley et al, 2004; Norouzi and Savage, 2005; Chappell et al, 2001; Booth and Booth, 1994, 1996; Atkinson, 1997, 2000; Atkinson & Walmsley, 1999; Atkinson & Williams, 1990).

The voices of people with learning difficulties have begun to be heard through stories of individual and collective accounts of lived experience (Booth & Booth, 1996; Goodley, 2000; Atkinson, 1993; Atkinson and Walmsley, 1999). Goodley (2000: 47) argues that 'telling stories is a large part of what people do; storytelling is used as a method to lend some insights into the experiences and realities of narrators'. Individuals tell stories about their lives in order to make sense of their lives (Gillman et al, 1997), and their experiences (Stuart, 2002). With regards to my study, I believed that people with learning difficulties had some stories to tell. Therefore, I attempted to capture the salient experiences in the lives of some people with learning difficulties and their views on their lives in their own words.

Walker (2004) argues that in narrative research, there are no specific techniques and data is likely to be collected through 'interviews, observations, field notes, diaries, personal memories, photographs and other visual methods, and historical and contemporary documents' (p. 9). In this research, I employed various data collections tools, such as oral history, letters, photographs, interviews, field notes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998: 163-8), and 'documents like class plans and newsletter...' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999: 6). Here I describe the methods:

Oral history: In obtaining an oral history from my informants, I asked them to tell their own stories in their own ways (Anderson & Jack, 1991). For example, I asked them to tell me the story of their work. The informants talked about their work, employment experiences, educational background from school to college, their social situation such as where they lived and; who they lived with. I used a semi-structured interview which guided me to focus on the employment experiences of the informants. Booth and Booth (1996: 56) note that in narrative research interviews should be 'open and fluid' in order to enable the subject 'to take the lead' (Plummer cited in Booth & Booth, 1996: 56). I asked the informants some specific questions, for example, what do you like/dislike in your life? For example, if they responded 'bullying' as a bad experience in their life, I asked them why it was bad. Most interviews with my informants were set up more in conversational forms (Oakley, 1981; Goble, 1999). Hence:

Conversation entails listening. The listener's response may constitute a probe into experience that takes the representation of experience far beyond what is possible in an interview. Indeed, there is probing in conversation, in-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the other (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998: 168).

Most of the interviews with were recorded and later transcribed. In addition, the interviews were turned into written field texts through transcription and note taking. There have been concerns about the validity of data arising from direct interviews with people with learning difficulties (Rodgers, 1999: 425). In this regard, some researchers argue that one useful approach could be to 'hold a joint interview with a participant and someone who knew them well, to establish biographical details and family structures, for example, before the confidential research interviews were held' (Rodgers, 1999: 425; see also Atkinson, 1988 and 1989). However, as a professional who worked with people with learning difficulties for many years, I did not use any of these approaches because I believe that people with learning difficulties, like non-disabled people are able

to talk about their own lives for themselves. Researchers should not cross check people with learning difficulties by saying that their knowledge about their own lives is invalid because they have a 'learning difficulty'. Therefore, their information needs to be confirmed by someone else. Some researchers who often judged people with learning difficulties because of their label, as Bogdan and Taylor (1982) argue 'the label 'mentally retarded' creates barriers to our understanding of people on their own terms. It prevents us from seeing and treating the people so defined as human beings with feelings, understandings, and needs. When we label people, we lose the ability to empathize with them—to see the world from their point of view' (p. 222). In this research, I interviewed my informants, individually. However, in three cases, the parents of the informants stayed with their children. I did not ask them to stay with their children in order to cross check their children's information and they stayed by their own will. In researching stories of my informants, and in collecting data, I did not only focus on interviewing the informants, because there was some possibility to exclude the voice of some informants who could not speak clearly. Therefore, I used the following methods as well.

Letters: Robert Savage and Lisa Watkins gave me some written information. When I had meetings with them I asked them to think about some experiences like what is bad or good in their lives; what their plans were for the future and what they liked or disliked in their lives. They gave me extra information in writing. In follow-up meetings we talked about their writings. Clandinin and Connelly (1999: 167) note letters as an interesting field text in which informants try to give an account of themselves, 'make meaning of their experiences, attempt to establish and maintain relationships with another'.

Photographs: Photographs, pictures and films are great important documents to many researchers in the social science which often present a very good source for data and information (Mason, 2002). Clandinin and Connelly (1999: 165) argue 'We may collect and save photographs of people remarkable to our lives in some way, of special events, of places. Each photograph marks a special memory in our time, a memory around which we construct stories'. In the process of doing my fieldwork the informants' trust increased gradually and they gave extensive information about their lives. Robert Savage, Lisa Watkins and Roy Watson showed me photograph albums about their friends, holiday, school and some special events in their lives. For example, Robert

showed me his albums about when he won a gold medal in swimming in the International Olympics in Geneva in 1995. While viewing his album, Robert described his feeling to me when his name was on the radio and his photos were in many newspapers like the Guardian.

Documents: Robert Savage and Lisa Watkins also gave me some documents about their social and school achievements. This enabled me to obtain more information and a better understanding of my informants. Plummer (cited in Mason, 2002: 107) calls documents and visual phenomena ‘accessories to a life story’, that is, visual and sensory elements or ‘biographical objects’ which help to convey personal or cultural biographies. I spent 15-20 sessions spanning around 40 hours with my informants in several settings. I spent more than 70 hours with some informants like Julia Martin, Sheila Davies and particularly Robert Savage.

In using narrative methods with people, particularly those with learning difficulties, there are some issues that researchers need to be aware of. Inarticulateness and unresponsiveness are two common issues which researchers need to pay great attention to what goes unsaid (Booth & Booth, 1996). The informants may ‘choose to be silent while telling their stories because of their negative memories associated with the past, for instance, sexual abuse’ (Salvatori et al, 2003: 14). The validity and credibility of information provided by informants also might be questioned. Matikka and Vesala (cited Salvatori et al, 2003: 14) note, ‘the problem of acquiescence might have led some informants to say things in order to please the researcher’. In addition, there is possibility that some of the interviewer’s questions were beyond the informants’ scope of understanding (Salvatori et al, 2003).

Ethnography approach:

Ethnography is an approach to research that involves immersion within, and investigation of, a culture or social world—can be conceived as a methodological persuasion: a guiding approach to research, in which the researcher attends to the rich generation of meaning by social actors, as a consequence of various structures and decision made by individuals—is committed to representing the actions of the relatively unknown, perhaps oppressed and ignored, insiders of a given social group (Goodley et al, 2004: 56-7).

In this research I also used ethnography to ‘understand another way of life from the native point of view’ (Spradley, 1979: 3). Ramcharan and Grant (2001) argue that ‘in

seeking to represent the lives of people within their cultures from their point of view, ethnographic research establishes a voice for people with intellectual disabilities (ID)' (p. 351). Through this approach, I wanted to 'make sense of the unknown, dark, hidden culture of the 'native'' (Goodley, 2003: 3-4), and I wanted to bring 'the voice of people with IDs into the public sphere' (Ramcharan & Grant, 2001: 351). For example, there was an assumption that inability of people with learning difficulties was the key barriers to their employment. I wanted to observe and take part in the real lives of people with learning difficulties to investigate their employment experiences and to understand their behaviours in their working environments. Thus:

Wherever it has been adopted, a key assumption has been that by entering into a close and relatively prolonged interaction with people (one's own or other) in their everyday lives, ethnographers can better understand the beliefs, motivations, and behaviours of their subjects than they can be using any other approach (Tedlock, quoted in Goodley et al, 2004: 58).

In considering the employment experiences of the six informants in the natural environment, I observed their behaviour in the workplace and at the Gateway Club because observation can provide the detailed description about environment and human behaviour even in difficult circumstances (Foster, 1996). Since I started my voluntary work at the Gateway Club I had the chance to observe three of my informants for two hours every week for a period of over two years. I gained a lot of information directly from my informants about their lives. Without working at the Gateway Club as a volunteer, gaining that information would have been impossible.

Baszanger and Dodier (2004: 9) note that the writing of fieldnotes is one of the important parts of observation (see also, Wolfinger, 2002). Observing and documenting the data at the same time is difficult and documenting events at a later time could lead to missing data and information, and the researcher is only able to observe a restricted range of subjects or a small sample of the behaviour (Foster, 1996). In overcoming this limitation, when I observed the informants' behaviour at the Gateway Club and workplaces, I wrote the fieldnotes immediately after my observations so that I would not lose the data.

Observation is very time consuming, and it may be even very costly to undertake such a long venture, when compared with other methods of data collection (Banister et al, 1994: Foster, 1996). In some cases, the researcher may not get the required data and information, which could lead to misinterpretation and inaccurate results (Foster, 1996).

The subject may, consciously or unconsciously, change the way they behave because they have realised that they are being observed, and therefore observational accounts of their behaviour may be inaccurate representations of how they behave 'naturally' (Angrosino & Mays de P'erez, 2000; Foster, 1996). However, Dooley (1990) refutes this, even arguing that non-reactivity would eventually prevail and could really turn out to be the strengths of the participant-observer procedure when the subjects have become accustomed to the observer's presence and return to their normal routines and become 'natural' again. Observation can tell researchers 'not only what is going on, but also who is involved, when and where things happen. It can illuminate processes and it can examine causality, suggesting why things happen as they do in particular settings. It can give access to non-verbal cues' (Banister et al, 1994: 29). Observation is one of the best methods of gaining qualitative information about the informants. It works well for 'those who cannot speak for themselves' (Foster, 1996: 59).

Through observation, I gained insights into and information about the employment experiences and work duties of the informants, the informants' interactions with the customers, colleagues and managers at work, and also their emotional feelings at work. Without observing my informants at the workplace, gaining that information would have been impossible.

In order to consider the climate of the vocational opportunities for adults with learning difficulties and, as part of the ethnography approach, I reviewed the **case files of 200 employees with learning difficulties** working in several placements under the supervision of three supported employment agencies (SEA) and a Workstep contractor. Documents often represent a very good source for data and information which could be used in combination with other methods like observation and interviewing (Mason, 2002). The documents in the case files were text-based documents including various reports related to the employment histories of the informants from jobcentres, daycentres, social services and employment services (Mason, 1996, 2002). Each case file had some information about such things as gender, age, marital status, job title, working hours, wage, type of work, type of workplace, benefits, and type of accommodation. Most of the information in the case files was not observable because they took place in private without recourse to verbal descriptions and reconstructions" (Mason, 2002: 108). All 200 case files were kept in four supported employment agencies. Out of 200 case files, 174 were from three supported employment agencies: 85 case files were from Far House which was a local authority sector organisation; 58

were from Rambert which was a charity organisation and; 31 were from Rosemary which was a voluntary sector organisation and 26 were from MAP which was a private Workstep contractor.

Documents, whether visual or textual, are ‘constructed in particular contexts, by particular people, with particular purposes, and with consequences-intended and unintended’ (Mason, 2002: 110). All information of 200 case files were constructed by the SEPs to support people with learning difficulties in getting employment. I took and coded the information from the case files by a form (see Appendix 4) in order to be able to analyse it using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The informants

To do this research I needed to select the informants from the population of people with learning difficulties to which I had access. The term of ‘learning difficulties’ is used in this research instead of other synonyms such as ‘learning disabilities’, ‘intellectual impairment’, ‘development disability’, ‘intellectual disability’, ‘mental retardation’ (Goodley & Van Hove, 2005: 18), and ‘mental handicap’, ‘mental impairment’ (Goodley et al, 2004: 58). I chose six adults who were identified by service providers as having ‘learning difficulties’ and who had been living and working in Northtown for many years. From June 2001, I had extensive contact with several organisations such as the Employment Service, Disability Team Service, Social Security Service, Supported Employment Agencies in order to get information about the names, home/work place addresses and telephone numbers of people with learning difficulties. After obtaining the names and addresses of 45 people, the potential informants were sent letters (Appendix 5) with stamped addressed enclosed envelopes to invite and to seek their agreement to participate in my research. After six months, only fifteen people had responded. Of these fifteen, six people from one company agreed to participate in the research but withdrew a few days later for various reasons (see research limitation section), six people refused to take part, one address was incorrect and two people with learning difficulties agreed to take part in my research. While interviewing some employers in several workplaces, four adults with learning difficulties were found who agreed to participate in the research. In addition, for four of the six people, authorisation was needed from their parents. It was obtained. When I wanted authorisation from adults with learning difficulties, in some cases, I had to get it

from their parents and carers as well. Some informants told me that they were interested in participating in my research as long as their parents gave their consent. In some cases, I waited several weeks for this. Finally, after gaining parents' authorisation, six people agreed to be my participants as follow:

Robert Savage: Robert who has Down's syndrome, is 26 years old, the 2nd child in his family, and lives with his parents. He is a member of a self-advocacy group for people with learning difficulties, and a member of Spark Theatre Company where he is learning how to act. He is doing part-time voluntary work at two different placements: doing office work in one and pricing clothes in the other.

Julia Martin: Julia is 29 years old and lives in residential care with her friends. She has been doing voluntary work as a kitchen assistant in several placements and has had no wage for many years. She attends the Gateway Club and spends most of the time with her friends.

Lisa Watkins: Lisa is 25 years old, lives with her parents and has been doing voluntary work for many years in different placements. Currently, she has no paid job, and works full-time as a kitchen assistant.

Roy Watson: Roy is 34 years old and lives with his mum. He worked in several placements for 18 years. Out of these 13 years were paid work, full-time as a shop assistant in a greengrocery shop. He has been out of work for four months because the greengrocery shop closed down. He is currently looking for a proper job.

Sheila Davies: Sheila is 46 years old, the first child of her family and lives with her mother and disabled sister. She has been doing voluntary work in several placements for 22 years. She works four days a week as a kitchen assistant. After many years experience she has never been paid.

Sally James: Sally is 39 years old. She lives with her friends in a homecare. She has been doing part-time voluntary work as a kitchen assistant in different placements for 5 years.

I spoke to the six informants about my research and the time and information that I needed for my research. Before starting my study I felt that it was essential for me to spend some time getting to know the informants and to build up relationships.

Therefore, one year before doing my research, I started voluntary work at Northtown Gateway Club where three of the informants come to the club every week. They knew me very well because I had spent a lot of time with them playing football, snooker, dancing and talking about their lives. I also had a few meetings in their work placements (except in the case of Lisa Watkins).

In narrative research the relationship of researchers to informants is central to experience the experiences of the informants (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) asserted, in each case study, the researcher has to establish rapport with informants through repeated contact over time. The researcher has to develop a detailed understanding of their experiences and perspectives. Therefore, as a result of my voluntary work in the Gateway Club, I was able to establish very strong rapport with my informants and their families. In each session that I met my informants they were more interested in participating in study and there was a very close rapport between us. This rapport enabled me to create a comfortable and relaxing environment. In addition, in order to obtain information about my informants in various circumstances and to gain further insight I met them in a range of settings. For example, I was able to meet and talk to Robert Savage at home, Gateway Club, Spark Theatre Company, a self-advocacy group, Northern town Parliament, workplace, city centre, Rambert Street Community Centre, bus and tram.

Out of the six informants, four people lived with their families. Therefore, I had contact with their parents (Robert Savage's parents particularly his mother, Roy Watson's mother, Lisa Watkins' father) through interviews and phone calls. Most of the interviews with them were recorded and later transcribed.

Writing and analysing stories

At the completion of a narrative study, it is often not clear when the writing of the study began. There is frequently a sense that writing began during the opening negotiations with participants or even earlier as ideas for the study were first formulated. Material written throughout the course of the inquiry often appears as major pieces of the final document (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990: 7).

Life story aims 'to emphasise the significance of a number of experiences of people with learning difficulties—in this sense, while our characters have no hand in the writing of their own stories, an ethnographic stance encourages the writer/researcher to

try to authentically capture their stories in meaningful and accountable ways' (Goodley et al, 2004: 59). At the back of writing of any story is a writer (Goodley et al, 2004: 79). According to Tedlock (2000) ethnographic writers may see their positions as 'professional stranger' or 'marginal native' (p. 457). In this research, I did my study from a position of 'supporter and ally of the informants'. As is mentioned above, most information that I gained, particularly about three of the informants were emerged from a long period of my involvement with people with learning difficulties in the Gateway Club.

Atkinson (quoted in Goodley, 2000: 55) states that 'There is, more to telling – and hearing – people's accounts of their lives and experience than simply providing a forum. The role of the researcher, or listener, has a bearing on how stories unfold and what they are about'. I begin the process of writing stories by turning to a question posed by Goodley (1998: 119): How does the writer construct the life story of the narrator? The mutilation and contamination of story 'become more acute in collaborative life story research where the researcher primarily becomes the writer of others' oral stories' (Goodley, 2000: 49). Hence:

Turning interview transcriptions into stories is a difficult process. Writers face problems of contamination: first, when moving from the animated spoken word to the 'frozen text'—second, when turning disclosures into stories—to include some words and exclude others may be seen as distorting the information people give—any type of qualitative analysis distorts the information received. Thematic analysis, for example, is especially harsh in the way it takes, bit by bit, from the experiences told by narrators. Similarly, decisions behind the writing of stories are arbitrary, open to personal preference and specific to a given time and place (Goodley, 2000: 56).

As is mentioned above, I got information related to the six informants through different methods. I shaped the first drafts of the six life stories by reviewing different resources including transcribed interviews, field notes, informant's writing, letters and school achievement records. Transcribing interviews was one of the most difficult parts of the process of writing the stories for me. This was because Persian or Farsi is my first language and English is the second language. Three of the informants spoke with very strong local accents and transcribing interviews took a long time.

In creating the first draft of the life story of each informant, I paid more attention to using their 'oral story'. I started writing the stories by turning interview transcriptions into the first draft. I realised that there were many repeated words and sentences which needed to be summarised. Occasionally when the six informants gave responses to my

questions, they gave me more explanations, details or they repeated many sentences and words. For example, when I asked them when they are starting their work, they gave me more details about when they got up in the early morning had breakfast, went to the bus stop, caught the bus, got off the bus, and started their work at 9.00am. So, in writing the story I deleted repeated sentences which did not assist the story.

Some sentences were short and had no meaning. So, it needed to connect short sentences to bring ideas together. This required the use of connectives like 'Also', 'Who', 'After that', 'Then' to help the continuity of the sentence.

In transcribing some interviews like Roy Watson's interview, I realised that Roy's sentences were in places completed by his mother's words when she thought that Roy was not being clear. For example:

Ghasem: Roy did you work in your dad's butcher's shop?

Roy: Yes I worked with dad

Ghasem: How long?

Roy: For few years

Ghasem: What did you do there?

Roy: Cleaning, I used to clean and wash down,

Ghasem: Only cleaning and washing down?

Roy: My dad had a machine in the shop

Ghasem: Did you work with Machine?

Roy: I used to strip it down.

Mother: He used to wash and clean all the pieces of the machine

Roy: I used to wash and clean all the pieces of the machine

Ghasem: Did you like it?

Roy: I enjoyed that

In Roy's life story the above section became: 'I worked with dad for a few years. I used to clean and wash down. My dad had a machine in the shop. I used to strip it down. I enjoyed that'. Therefore, in writing Roy's story, I did not include his mother sentence 'He used to wash and clean all the pieces of the machine' because I wanted to use the voice of the informants. Mischler (cited in Goodley, 1998: 118) asserted that 'if researchers wish to hear respondents' stories then they must invite them into their work, as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together they have to try to understand what their stories are about'. In this research, I invited all the six informants in writing their stories. We made some decision about each story and we used a number of strategies in writing the stories that I will consider below.

When the first draft was ready, I provided each informant with a copy typed to double-space and a large font (14). I had meetings with all informants and discussed their life stories. All informants reviewed their life stories and made changes to the first

draft. For example, Lisa Watkins deleted a word (grandmother) because her grandmother died before the review of her life story. Lisa asked me to add some sentences about her holiday, work, and leisure time activities to the story, so I did.

The second draft of the stories was written and all the names (except the names of narrators because they asked to keep their real names) were changed to pseudonyms. These drafts were sent to them and some of them made some changes again. For example, Roy told me that he lost his job and he wanted to add something about that his experience. In addition some sentences of the first draft of Roy's life story were changed from present to the past.

When writing the second draft I realised that there were many repetitive sentences in each story and also the contents of the six life stories were too large to bring into my thesis. I reviewed each story to see 'what is special about each story', and then I selected a name for each story based on its content. Later I had a few meetings with the informants and talked to them about the name of the story and also the issue of summarising. All the informants accepted summarising their life stories. For example, in summarising some parts of Robert Savage's story, I focused on the special things in Robert's life story (self-advocacy and work). In summarising the life stories, I needed to identify the way of deleting irrelevant words and sentences in Robert's story. An example was reported as follows.

The following paragraph is related to childhood section of Robert's life story and it was summarised into the next paragraph:

I live in the Rosemary area in the countryside. It is nice place to live. I live with my parents. About my childhood I can't remember very much but my mum said that I was born quite quickly and three weeks early on the dining room floor (laughing). So, my parents took me to the hospital. My mum said that one day later, when the Doctor visited me, he said to my mum, 'Your son has got Down's syndrome and he will be mentally handicapped for the rest of his life'. My mother was shocked and depressed about it. Then, they took me everywhere for treatment. Many years later, somebody said to my mum, "if you work hard with Robert, you will proud of your son'. So, my parents worked hard on me and they took me everywhere with them.



I can't remember about my childhood very much but my mum said that I was born quite quickly and three weeks early on the dining room floor (laughing). So, they took me to the hospital and a doctor said to them, 'Your son has got Down's syndrome and he will be mentally handicapped for the rest of his life'. They were shocked and took me everywhere for treatment.

Somebody said to my parents, 'if you work hard with Robert, you will proud of your son'. So, my parents did and they proud of me.

When reviewing one of the informants life story her father asked to take out the informant's sentence 'my parents don't let me go out' and we took out that sentence. Another informant felt that what was written about his father telling him off was too forceful. We took out two sentences and they replaced a sentence but a day later they asked to take out that new sentence as well. Therefore, they did not replace anything in the final draft. One informant's father asked to take out the informant's sentence 'my parents took me to hostel' and we did.

Finally, the third and final draft of the stories was written and they accepted it. I reminded all the informants that their life stories would be published and would become public. All informants asked to keep their real names. Later, one of the informants was not sure about keeping her real name and I thought that the other informants may have the same feeling. Therefore, I spoke to all informants and all the informants agreed to have pseudonyms which I consequently used.

The six stories reflect a participatory approach to life stories research. My informants participated with me in doing this research and were engaged very closely with me in the writing process of the stories. In terms of the informant's engagement in the writing the stories, there were some issues regarding 'voices' of the informants. Plummer (cited in Goodley et al, 2004: 87) notes 'articulacy is a necessary resource in narrative production'. Roy Watson and Robert Savage's mothers and Lisa Watkins' father were involved with interviewing their children. Lisa's father and Roy's mother answered some questions that I asked from their children. In writing the stories, I only brought the voices of the informants and did not include the parents' words in the stories. However, as is mentioned above, two informants' father had much power to limit their children's voices in the stories by asking me to delete two sentences of their children's stories. I asked the informants if it was ok and they said yes. Significantly, two informants' fathers asked me to delete some of their children's sentences. This was, perhaps because the fathers felt guilty about their behaviours regarding their daughters. That might have been why they did not look after their disabled children as well as they did their non-disabled children; why their disabled children grew up in a residential home rather than in their parents' home like the other children. Perhaps, two informants' fathers wanted to hide the fact of their behaviour towards their disabled children. Despite my wish to

keep the sentences, I did as the fathers requested and as the informants agreed and deleted the sentences.

My epistemological stance (explored in Chapter Four) has influenced my writing of the stories. Based on the epistemological positions in this research I wanted to understand the meaning of informants' lives, to analyse their experiences and perspectives, and to understand cultural barriers by valuing all informants' identities. Therefore, in writing stories, I shaped each story.

Analysis and making sense of life stories:

Booth (cited in Stalker, 1998: 12) refers to the 'ethics of representation' when analysing data obtained from people with learning difficulties using narrative techniques, whereby the researcher has a responsibility to make clear whose voice is speaking, his or her respondents'. I argue that most data that I analysed was the informants' words which I was 'coding, sorting, selecting, rejecting, merging, interpreting and quoting' (Stalker, 1998: 12). In making sense of the six stories I used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the important ways of analysing informants' talk about their experiences (Banister et al, 1994: Aronson, 1994). Thematic analysis focuses 'on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour' (Aronson, 1994: 1). It also involves 'identifying, and categorising topics and issues raised by informants in each interview, and subsequently across the data as a whole. Common themes are identified and categorised to encapsulate those commonalties of perception present in the data' (Goble, 1999: 452).

As I already mentioned, the research questions in this study were derived from my own experiences when working with disabled people, particularly with people with learning difficulties in Iran. Before starting the current research, I reviewed the existing literatures on employment for disabled people in Britain (see Chapter 3) and the social model of disability and some areas which were discussed in the social model of learning difficulties (see Chapter 4). Based on my understanding of the existing literatures (explored in Chapters 3 and 4), I shaped my research questions (described in Chapter One).

Aronson (1994) argues that the first step of thematic analysis is to collect the data. In order to consider how people with learning difficulties experience work in the current climate of post VP? I conducted six life stories of adults with learning difficulties and

reviewed 200 case files of employees with learning difficulties. In understanding the actions, belief and the voices of the informants, all their information gained through observation, interviews and documents (like informants' letters and school achievements records) were recorded. Later, all interviews were transcribed. From the transcribed interviews related to the research question, I listed four main patterns of experiences of my informants including family relationship, employment, educational and social experiences. Out of these categories (patterns) social experiences, educational and family relationships were not directly relevant to the first research question. However, these categories affected the employment experiences of people with learning difficulties. I put all information from the transcripts, field notes and documentary reviews together. There were a lot of similar information from different methods and resources. I brought all the similar information together in one group based on each pattern. Then, I identified all data related to these four patterns. I reviewed all the data I collected and saw where it fitted. Later, eleven sub-themes were identified from the pattern of the employment experiences category. I will discuss all of these areas in my findings chapter. As Leininger (1985) argues, 'Coherence of ideas rests with the analyst who has rigorously studied how different ideas or components fit together in a meaningful way when linked together' (p. 60). I brought all detailed information of all ideas and experiences relevant to these sub-themes 'which often are meaningless when viewed alone' (Leininger, 1985: 60) together to form a comprehensive picture of the informant's employment experiences. In this regard, a lot of information was derived from the data in each pattern. Then, the information was reduced and summarised. In summarising and reducing the data, I focused on the data which were not directly relevant to the first research question. By reading the data, I identified some important themes which were relevant to the research question. I collected them from the data of each pattern. For example, out of the eleven sub-themes, four main themes were identified including: poor employment circumstances, employment barriers, differences of the employment circumstances between male and female employees and the meaning of work. Then, I coded and sorted out the information into clusters and I categorised the information based on four themes. In making statements and arguments related to the collective data which were categorised based on themes, I returned to the existing literature. By reading the relevant existing literature I brought the relevant literature with the findings of the employment experiences of the informants together and I constructed a story. Then, all the data related to six life stories were presented in

Chapter Six. The statistical information related to 200 case files was analysed using SPSS. Then, I interpreted the data from the six life stories and the 200 case files in Chapter Seven. The data was compared with and contrasted against the existing literature.

Vulliamy and Webb (1992) argue that in analysing the data the validating of the data is one of the important issues which in quantitative research can be achieved through the cross-checking of numerical data and the use of established statistical tests. The validation of the data analysis in the qualitative research can be affected by using various methods and techniques for data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Vulliamy & Webb, 1992). As I already noted, I disagreed with the cross checking the data in this way, and in obtaining more accurate information about my informants I used various data collection which has already been described above.

Ethical issues

Researchers who study the lives of people with learning difficulties must take extreme care to avoid any harm to the informants by receiving their consent (Swain et al, 1998; Stalker, 1998; Goodley, 2000; Goodley et al, 2004; Freedman, 2001; Rodgers, 1999). Researchers should inform the informants 'truthfully about the research; protecting the identity of the informants; protecting the informants from harm, such as physical, emotional or any other kind' (Fontana & Frey, 2000: 662). Silverman (2001: 55) notes that 'informed consent' is an important ethical issue. Some people with learning difficulties 'have a tendency towards acquiescence, not because of their impairment, but because so many aspects of their lives are controlled by others' (Stalker, 1998: 6). In this regard, one of the main dilemmas that I came across in my research concerned gaining the consent of informants to be interviewed, developing an appropriate set of questions and the actual process of interviewing participants. Getting the authorisation of, and doing interviews with disabled people, particularly adults with learning difficulties can be disproportionately more difficult than with non-disabled peers (Oliver and Barnes, 1997). When I wanted to gain authorisation from some people with learning difficulties, in some cases, I had to gain authorisation from their parents as well. In some cases, I had to wait several weeks for their consent. In one case, a woman with learning difficulties was interested in participating in my research but she said that her parents' consent was necessary. Her parents did not give it. Gaining consent from

the parents of people with learning difficulties showed that people with learning difficulties had less power in their lives. There is an idea that people with learning difficulties are unable to make decisions for themselves (Rodgers, 1999). However, as a non-disabled researcher working with people with learning difficulties for many years in Iran and England, I agree with Rodgers (1999) that with careful explanation many people with learning difficulties would be able to make their own informed decision about whether to take part. In this regard, I provided and explained to the informants some information about myself and my research.

There were some ethical issues which I needed to deal with, such as **anonymity**. The heart of anonymity is that information provided by informants should in no way reveal their identity (Cohen et al, 2000: 61). Freedman (2001) argues that while the autonomy of individuals must be respected, researchers also 'have an ethical responsibility to protect vulnerable individuals from social, psychological, or physical risks of research participation' (p. 130). In this regard, I had an obligation to **respect** my informants' right to privacy as Swain et al (1998) argued that privacy 'entails the right of participants to control the information communicated to others, to the researcher initially, and in subsequent public documents of any kind' (p. 29). Walker (2004: 11) argues that respect is one of the ethical principles that researchers need to consider in research as 'Everyone is entitled to respect in the sense of 'to pay attention, to observe carefully''.

In addition, in the light of my research proposal, I did not anticipate any infringement to my participants' physical or emotional well being. I expected to treat my participants fairly without any violation to their right to anonymity and confidentiality or to a misinterpretation of their views. I decided to treat my informants based on the principles of veracity, privacy, confidentiality and fidelity. For example, all but one of the informants agreed to have pseudonyms. So, I used pseudonyms rather than informants' real names.

Regarding veracity, I made myself an obligation to be honest with my informants and data. Walker (2004) notes that honesty is one of the ethical principles for every researcher in observation research methods. It means researchers 'approaching data openly, making only such judgments as could be supported by the evidence, and not ignoring evidence when it suited them' (p. 11). In this regard, I provided accurate information about my research. In selecting informants and in getting relevant information such as the names and addresses of the informants, most of the managers of

the organisations avoided giving the relevant information for reasons of confidentiality. In relation to privacy, the informants had the right to limit access to themselves physically, emotionally and cognitively. Therefore, I respected their rights of privacy. For example, when I wanted to see the informants, some of them asked me to visit them at a time that it was not suitable for me. However, I respected the informants and I visited them at a time that was convenient for them. In addition, all interviewees had the power to veto their participation in the research at anytime that they wanted. One of the research dilemmas was access to private settings such as home and workplace.

Communicating with female informants presented a few difficulties. Playing football, walking, talking and having long conversations with the men helped me gain more information from them. With the male informants, I was able to go to the city centre, and their workplaces. But there was not the same relationship with the females. The dilemma in communicating with the female participants rose from the conditions of their parents' consent. The parents of the female informants did not give their consent for me to go out or be alone with their daughters. In many cases, the communication with female informants was only at their homes, workplaces, and the social club. In one case, I could not have communication with one of my female informants in more than one place. Her father gave me his consent to be with his daughter only once a week on Mondays from 7pm to 9pm, and only at their home. In addition, it was impossible to meet the informant at her workplace because her employer did not authorise me to go there. Therefore, all the information about this case was based on 12 meetings with her at home.

The risk of intrusiveness and expectations of continuing friendship as Stalker (1998) mentioned in her research, were also considerable in my study. I interviewed three informants at their parental home and two at residential home. For the informants who lived in homecare, I was not familiar to other tenants. Then, my informants introduced me to their friends as a volunteer from the Gateway Club and as a researcher. As I have already mentioned, I had a very close social relationship with the five of my informants and we enjoyed each other's company and my contact with three of them has also continued after the study period. We frequently exchange greeting cards and talk on the phone as Stalker (1998) did in her research. Robert Savage who works in a Self-advocacy group often invites me to attend their monthly meeting and they accepted me as a voluntary member of their group.

I decided to observe my informants in their workplaces and also to interview their employers as well, but the employers did not give their consent. Therefore, I could not gain more information from the work environment of two informants.

The informants had the right to control information about themselves. Kent (2000) argues that researchers do not have the right to delve into their informants' lives without the informants' permission. Therefore, I promised my informants to keep their information and documents in a safe place. I respected the confidentiality of individual responses and promised them that their information would not be disclosed to other parties at the site of attributed responses. As is mentioned above, in writing the life stories, I gave the stories to the informants several times and they had power to change and to add information.

In addition, I promised to the informants that I would not share their information with anyone without their consent. For example, with Robert Savages' consent, his life story has been published in a book (Norouzi & Savage, 2005).

Section 2: Gathering the perspective of employers and supported employment providers

In this section, I will address the research methods use for second research question, 'How are people with learning difficulties understood by their employers in mainstream workplaces? And I will consider the third research question, 'How do supported employment providers promote 'meaningful' work opportunities for people with learning difficulties?' The methods of data collection, analysis and some ethical issues will be considered in this section.

Methods of data collection, analysis and ethical issues

Methods (Survey questionnaire and interview):

In considering the experiences and perspectives of the employers who worked with people with learning difficulties, I utilized a survey questionnaire (Appendix 1). In questionnaire research, the same questions are usually given to respondents in the same order so that the same information can be collected from every member of the sample (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000: 999). The quality of data obtained by a questionnaire

depends upon the quality of the questionnaire itself. Wellington suggests that researchers must avoid making long, difficult, presumptuous and embarrassing questions in questionnaire (2004: 3-7). In addition, Wellington argues that researchers should try to guarantee anonymity of the informants, 'Especially where the respondent may be put into a vulnerable position if identification is made' (2004: 6). In this research, the questionnaire was a 'semi structured questionnaire' (Cohen et al, 2000: 248), which consisted of seven closed questions about the size of the company and the number of employees; six open questions about what encouraged employers to employ people with learning difficulties and; at the end of the questionnaire the employers were asked eight attitude questions regarding employment of people with learning difficulties.

I used a survey questionnaire to take advantage of this method as Wellington argues 'Speed and ease of completion for the respondent, and speed and ease of categorisation for the analyst' (2004: 9). However the information given by questionnaire is restricted to the categories created by the researcher and researchers would 'miss the opportunity of serendipitous information' (Wellington, 2004: 10). In overcoming this dilemma I had both open and closed questions in the questionnaire. In addition, I had one 'sweep-up' question at the end of my questionnaire, 'we would be most interested to know about any other views you may have about the employment of people with learning difficulties in Northtown. Please add below any other comments that you feel are important'. This type of open-ended question as Wellington argues 'Frees the respondent from pre-determined categories' (2004: 10).

Interview: As is mentioned above, I could not get detailed information about employers' experience through survey questionnaires. In order to get more detailed qualitative insights into the experiences of employers working with people with learning difficulties, separate in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with 12 employers. In addition, I conducted eight semi-structured-interviews with supported employment providers in order to gain the detailed qualitative insight into their experiences and perspectives. I provided an interview schedule for employers (Appendix 2), and an interview schedule for SEPs (Appendix 3), and I conducted interviews following an interview guide specifying topics related to the second and the third research questions. I gave considerable liberty to the respondents to express their views. All interviews with employers and SEPs were recorded and later transcribed.

Banister et al (1994) suggest researchers do a practice interview, perhaps with a friend to receive frank feedback on the content and process of the interview, 'this helps to identify and iron out problems with the interview schedule and with the recording equipment. Not least, you will get a lot of confidence from the experience, even if you are also made acutely aware of the demands made on you as interviewer' (Banister et al, 1994: 55). In this regard, I did a pilot study and as a result of the interview with two employers and four supported employment providers, I changed some of my questions in interview schedule for my informants in the main research. In addition, I became very confident in using this technique for my study.

The informants

In order to address the second research question, I needed to select the informants from employers working with employees with learning difficulties in mainstream workplaces. These employers were among those who cooperated with the supported employment agencies and Disability Employment Team Services in employing people with learning difficulties. In obtaining the names and addresses of employers, there was extensive contact with the same organisations, mentioned before. There were many difficulties contacting the employers. I have reported these in the dilemmas section. When the names and addresses of 79 employers were obtained, 79 survey questionnaires, a letter which explained the subject and the aim of the study, a support letter (Appendix 5), and an enclosed stamped addressed envelope were sent to them. 26 survey questionnaires were sent by myself, 26 through the Rambert Supported Employment Agency, and 27 through the MAP which was a Workstep contractor in February 2002. Before sending the questionnaires to the employers, phone contact was made and information about the subject and aim of the study given.

From 79 employers, only 21 people responded. When I contacted employers about sending back the questionnaire, I realised that some of them were not interested in answering the questions. In addition 21 respondents that's none of the respondents then did not complete some of the questions. To obtain more information from these employers I made phone contact with them. Nine of them agreed to be interviewed. These included the managers of two coffee shops, a lunch club, two factories, a wholesale market, the university, a charity shop and a pathway project. In addition,

three managers of a grocery shop, and two supermarkets were interviewed. So, I interviewed 12 employers.

To consider the third research question, I needed to select the informants from supported employment providers (SEPs). As is mentioned in Chapter Three, supported employment has been adopted by the British Government as the term to describe all forms of 'assisted' employment, including Sheltered workshops and the Sheltered Placements Scheme (Beyer et al, 2003; Simons & Watson, 1999: 18), integrated paid employment (Pannell & Simons, 2000), and supported schemes (Curran et al cited in PMSU, 2005). Beyer et al (2003) stated that 'the Supported Placements Scheme (SPS) element began in 1985 and provided the route through which disabled people can find jobs in ordinary companies. Local Authorities and Voluntary Bodies acted as Sponsors for SPS, finding them jobs with 'host' companies. Contracts with Local Authorities and Voluntary Bodies are managed by the Supported Employment Procurement Advice and Consultancy Service (SEPACS) on a regional basis, while contract arrangements with Remploy Ltd are managed centrally within ES' (p. 2). Beyer and his colleagues (Beyer et al, 1997) identified over 200 supported employment agencies that were working either wholly or largely within the Supported Employments Scheme. Fifty eight percent of the total income of supported employment agencies which implement this scheme comes from the social services department, 15 percent from the health authorities and only 5% from employment services (Beyer et al, 1997). In this research, supported employment providers are people who work in several public, private and voluntary sector organisations to provide additional support for disabled people (Beyer et al, 2003, 2004). The Association for Supported Employment (AfSE) (2002) reports that more than 200 agencies in the UK assist disabled people in gaining paid employment. In this regard, the supported employment providers in this study are people who assist those with learning difficulties in gaining paid jobs by teaching them job-skills, helping them get jobs and assisting them at work.

The approach to supported employment in this study is based on the principle of inclusion and is strictly-defined. In other words 'specialist supported employment stipulates that disabled people should have real jobs for real pay' (O'Bryan et al Box 1 cited in Schneider et al, 2004: 11).

A definition of ‘specialist supported employment’

A key assumption underlying the specialist sector’s approach to supported employment is that the workplace is the best place to learn a job. As a matter of principle, it starts from the assumption that all disabled people may wish to access paid work, and that no individual or group should be seen as ‘unemployable’. It is concerned with addressing some of the social, attitudinal, policy and proactive barriers that exclude groups from paid work.

The approach also attempts to set paid work in its wider social context. It is concerned with inclusion, in terms of both economic and social participation; it is meant to be about ‘real’ jobs in ordinary (non-segregated) workplaces.

Supported employment agencies inevitably vary in their approach (and in the extent to which they are able to put the ideal of supported employment into practice) but typically offer a combination of:

- Helping people identify their skills and preferences through the development of a vocational profile;
- Job development to find the person’s preferred job through contact with employers;
- Job analysis to find out more about the workplace, co-workers, and the support the individual might need in that environment;
- Job support to ensure that both the employee and employer receive ‘just enough’ creative assistance, information and back-up to achieve success, with this support continuing as long as it is needed;
- Career support to help people think in the longer term about career progression (O’Bryan et al cited in Schneider et al, 2004: 11).

The Workstep is the current SEP provided by Jobcentre Plus, with an emphasis on increasing the proportion of people who move from supported to mainstream employment (PMSU, 2005: 158). Workstep replaced the Supported Employment Programme in April 2001, with the explicit aim of supporting disabled people

particularly those who have barriers to finding and keeping work (Corden et al, 2003; Beyer et al, 2003; PMSU, 2005) or disabled people who are long-term unemployed or on Incapacity Benefit and gives modified support and training to both employees and employers (Beyer et al, 2004: 11). Disabled people who are under the supervision of the Workstep programme receive subsidies from the British Government to cover part of their wages. Regarding the nature of financial support for employers and disabled employees Peter, the manager of MAP Workstep explained it was:

Government subsidy that we can use to cover part of their wages, this is because, some people with disabilities may not be able to work as competitively as an able-bodied person or there may be certain duties that they cannot perform. That it is more the case with people with learning disabilities, for example, if some people with learning difficulties work at the supermarket, one of the duties, may have to be the use of the till and the person may not be able to use the till. If that duty is, say 25% of the total job then clearly person is not working as effectively as someone with an able body. We are able to subsidise that 25% of the wage. So the person with learning disability receives the full wage for the job. The employer pay 75% of the wage, we as MAP pay 25% and then claim that back from the Government. This type of support helps the employers to help people maintain the jobs that they are in.

To gain the consent of the supported employment providers (SEPs), there was extensive contact with them in their workplaces. Eight SEPs were found. They agreed to participate in the research and were interviewed. In this study, the SEPs included a support worker and the manager of Far House Supported Employment Agency which is a local authority sector organisation; two support workers and the manager of Rambert Agency which is a voluntary sector organisation; a support worker and the founder of Spring Agency which is a voluntary sector organisation; a support worker and the manager of MAP which is a private Workstep contractor. All interviews with SEPs were recorded and later transcribed.

Analysis of the data

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data related to the second and the third research questions. I reviewed the experiences and perspectives of employers and SEPs working with people with learning difficulties in mainstream workplaces. In considering how people with learning difficulties were perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces, I obtained information from these employers by semi-structured interview and survey questionnaire. The interviews were transcribed and the information from the

survey questionnaire was read and organised under thematic headings. A lot of the information from the interviews and survey questionnaires was similar. I ground all similar information based on subjects and themes.

All interviews with SEPs were recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically into categories derived from the data then compared with and contrasted against the extant literature. In my research, some categories about the nature of employment for people with learning difficulties used to analyse the data are derived from the existing literature. But most categories used to analyse the data are derived from the data itself. One example is the category about the experiences and perspectives of employers and SEPs regarding employment for people with learning difficulties.

Ethical issues

Gaining the consent of informants to be interviewed and those to respond to the survey questionnaire, was one of the main dilemmas that I faced in my research. Some employers and SEPs did not agree to participate in my research and two of them gave me their consent but later withdrew their co-operation because they had had a bad experience with researchers in the past.

I respected my informants' right to privacy. To conduct interviews employers and SEPs, I arranged some meetings with them and I visited them at a time and place that was convenient for them. Most informants asked me to interview them at their workplaces and I agreed. Some workplaces were not suitable for interviewing. There was noise and several phone calls which interrupted the interview. In addition, all informants had the power to veto their participation in my research at anytime that they wanted. I had very good rapport with my informants. I had close relationships with some of them. I invited them to come to my house for dinner and I had a great time with some of my informants.

However, one of the dilemmas that I faced was barriers from the managers that I called 'manager barriers'. The manager barriers were related to the managers of some companies who were not interested in letting some employees in their companies participate in my research. Therefore, I believe they persuaded their employees to stop working with me. In this case I got authorisation from six workers with learning difficulties who were working all in the same company. I had two meetings with these employees and they were interested in participating in my research but the manager of

the company prevented them continuing their co-operation. She said, “We pay six pounds per hour to employees with learning difficulties in this company and I will not let them participate in more than one session in your research”.

In addition, in arranging some meetings, making some appointments, and re-arranging some cancelled meetings with the managers of some companies was time-consuming and in the end they did not participate. For example, I arranged a meeting with one the informants two months in advance. When I went to her workplace on the interview date, her secretary said that her manager was on holiday and she would not be back for another three weeks. I waited for her and when she came back from her holiday, I organised another meeting for a month later. To interview that employer, I waited four months.

Apart from the ethical issues, I also faced some dilemmas which affected the research. For example, one of the dilemmas was related to recording data. When recording one interview, I forgot to switch the tape recorder on to record and I realised the problem after 45 minutes. In addition, during two interviews, interviewees had phone call and they wanted to respond, so I had to switch off the tape recorder for a few minutes and when they resumed the interviews, I missed some sentences of their interviews. Moreover, one of my interviews took place in a factory where there was no quiet room to talk. So that interview was taken in a noisy environment and sometimes I could not hear the interviewee voice very clearly. Furthermore, when recording interviews, the battery of the tape recorder became weak so the quality of some parts of the interview was poor and it was difficult to decipher what was said. When interviewing five interviewees asked me to switch the tape recorder off because they wanted to say some things off the record. To solve some problems related to recording data I always kept two boxes of battery and extra tape. In addition, I took notes.

Section 3: From Northtown to Iran: Taking the findings further

In this section, I will address the fourth research question, ‘How the findings from this thesis can contribute to the promotion of the participation of people with learning difficulties in Iranian society?’ As is mentioned above, by this question, I will reflect upon the findings to explore possible contribution of the UK experience on overcoming

employment barriers and promoting the employment of people with learning difficulties in Iran.

Goodley (1996) argues the need for reflection in qualitative research in relation to two aspects: first, the role of the researcher when informants' accounts are collected and, secondly, the researcher's role in interpreting and presenting these. With regards to my research, firstly, I will consider the view of some disability researchers about disability research production. In this regard, two models of research: emancipatory and participatory research will be described. Then, I will introduce my research position in this study. I also will explore my role in analysing, interpreting and presenting the UK findings (research questions, 1, 2 and 3) in order to consider possible contribution of these findings on promoting the employment services for people with learning difficulties in Iran. In relation to this, I will discuss some issues of the transferability of the UK findings to the Iranian society in terms of social, economical, cultural and political differences.

Disability research production: participatory or emancipatory? Where is my research position?

Ontological knowledge is one of the important issues which debate in the social modellist research, 'only disabled people can understand the conditions of disablement and impairment' (Goodley, 2005: 2). Similarly, there is a logic which states that if 'a researcher is to empathise with those being researched then it follows that their life history must be as near as possible to that of the people being studied—people with impairments are best equipped to research disability' (Barnes, 1992: 117). Therefore, this argument has been identified against non-disabled researchers that a non-disabled researcher is never able to have the same experience as disabled people. Oliver and Barnes (1997) disagree with the view that 'only disabled people can or should do disability research' (p. 811). Barnes (1992) argues that in producing a good qualitative disability research, having impairment is not necessary, 'having impairment does not automatically give someone an affinity with disabled people, nor an inclination to do disability research' (p. 121). To do emancipatory research; 'for researchers with or without impairments, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of disability it is essential that they interact with disabled people on a regular basis' (Barnes, 1992: 122).

Disabled people should be represented on all decision-making bodies concerned with disability research (Barton, 1998: 35). However, their opportunities to participate in disability research despite the emergence of an emancipatory agenda remain very limited because of society's failure to accommodate the needs of disabled people (Oliver and Barnes, 1997: 811). For example, environmental barriers present a host of problems for disabled researchers doing field work (p. 812).

What does 'emancipatory' and 'participatory' mean? Zarb (1992) argues that participatory research will lead to emancipatory research. 'Participatory research which involves disabled people in a meaningful way is perhaps a prerequisite to emancipatory research in the sense that researchers can learn from disabled people and vice versa, and that it paves the way for researchers to make themselves 'available' to disabled people' (Zarb, 1992: 128). He considers the distinctions between participatory and emancipatory research and between material and social relations of research production by raising four questions:

Who controls what the research will be about and how it will be carried out?
How far we have come in involving disabled people in the research process?
What opportunities exist for disabled people to criticise the research and influence future directions? What happens to the products of the research?
(Zarb, 1992: 128).

As is mentioned above, in exploring the experiences of people with learning difficulties, I used a collaborative life story. Hence:

The level of participation of disabled people in decision making about the research, the extent of consultation during and after the research, and who instigated and funded the research (i.e. disabled people or traditional funding institutions) are important issues which distinguish participatory from emancipatory research (Zarb, 1992: 129).

Therefore, I will argue that my research is not emancipatory as one of the aspects of emancipatory research is 'using the views and opinions of disabled people to design and conduct research projects on disability issues' (Corbett, 1998: 58). I did not use the view of the informants to design my research questions. The empowerment of disabled people in emancipatory research is vital; this 'means that the research is actually controlled by them as part of a broader process of empowerment' (Zarb, 1997: 51). It is disabled people themselves who are controlling the research project and deciding who should be involved and how (Zarb, 1992: 128). As I already noted, all research questions are derived from my personal experiences and the informants did not raise any research questions. In addition, I decided to consider the employment experiences

of the informants through life story research. In fact, the involvement of people with learning difficulties in the process of my research was limited (Riddell et al, 1998). However, through the participatory methodology, I offered and provided greater opportunities for the informants to be involved and to be engaged with the research process (Chappell, 2000: 38), and to influence the way in which their experiences were conveyed via research (p. 42). A lot of literature shows that participatory research model for people with learning difficulties have been developed over the last few decades (Ramcharan & Grant, 1994; Ward & Flynn, 1994; Cocks & Cockram, 1995; Stalker, 1998; Goodley 2000). People with learning difficulties are interested in participatory research rather than emancipatory research because of the exclusion of people with learning difficulties from higher education where they could gain a foothold to do research themselves (Chappell, 2000). People with learning difficulties also 'have little access to the written word and, sometimes, they may struggle with the spoken word too' (Atkinson, 1997: 19). In this regard, they 'need sympathetic non-disabled researchers who can use their position to articulate the experiences of people with learning difficulties to the outside world' (Chappell, 2000: 41). Therefore, as a non-disabled researchers working with people with learning difficulties for many years in several positions, I decided to be a sympathetic researcher to support people with learning difficulties to convey their real experiences to others through the participatory research as many researchers have attempted to work with people with learning difficulties using participatory methodologies, (Ward & Simons, 1998; Williams, 1999; Minkes et al, 1995, Stalker, 1998; Goodley, 2000). I agree with some researchers (Rodgers, 1998; Ward & Flynn, 1994; Ramcharan & Grant, 1994; Goodley, 2000) that people with learning difficulties can participate directly in research, generating their own knowledge, rather than have others respond on their behalf. With this belief, I explored the six informants' knowledge about their real lives through the participatory (collaborative life stories) approach.

Considering possible contribution of the UK findings on promoting services for people with learning difficulties in Iran

As is mentioned above, I am one of the disability study researchers who has been actively involved in disability studies in the majority world (see Chapter Two). Hence:

The 'majority world' (developing countries, the South, the Third World) is the world that the vast majority of the world's people live in, yet they have access to a fraction of the world's wealth and power—the term 'majority world' also gets away from geographical notions about wealth and power—using the word 'majority world' also enables a clear separation between western-dominated notions of progress, and the working and study of processes of development where 'development' is shorthand for change—social, economic, political, cultural, for better and for worse, complex and contradictory—in contrast, the richest countries of the world with a minority of the world's people exploit the lion's share of global resources. The minority world is (the west, the North, Industrial countries) (Stone, 1999: 4).

In terms of Stone's definition of the 'majority world' and 'minority world', I came from the 'majority world' – Iran to research the lives of people with learning difficulties in the 'minority world' – England in order to consider the possible contribution of the English findings in promoting services for people with learning difficulties in Iran. I begin by analysing, interpreting and presenting the UK findings through the Iranian lens. In so doing, I will consider whether transferring the UK findings to Iran with different cultural context will be appropriate. What issues perhaps might affect this transferring from the UK to Iran? What are the rights and wrongs, risks and rewards, of transferring the UK practices to Iran? What works and what doesn't work? Why? I will consider these issues in chapter ten.

As already noted, I am an Iranian non-disabled professional who worked with disabled people for many years in Iran. As a result, I will analyse the findings of research questions 1, 2 and 3 from different lenses: as an Iranian practitioner in the field of disability studies who was in an ally position vis a vis disabled people, the social model perspective but also from an Islamic perspective since Iran is an Islamic country and all legislation is made based on Islamic principles. I will bring key findings together in Chapter Ten. Based on the UK experience I will make some suggestions for possible changes in the service in overcoming employment barriers and promoting the employment of people with learning difficulties in Iran and England.

Analysing the UK findings by a researcher (myself) with Iranian lens and with different cultural, political, economical, and social background might raise some issues around validity and transferability of the data.

Issues of transferability of the findings: In this research, I collected my data by English language which is different from my first language (Persian/Farsi). When collecting and transcribing my data, I faced some difficulties which I already noted. In addition, when analysing my data, I was concerned about some issues in the research process like bias

in interpretation of the data. The fact that I research in my second language mean that there may be places where either I or my informants — or both of us — may have misinterpreted the data as Temple and Young (2004) note, the researchers who ‘using different languages may construct different ways of seeing social life’ (p. 164) of their informants. Spivak (1992) recognised power differentials between languages and between countries. In this regard, speaking for others, in any language, is always a political issue that involves the use of language to construct self and other (Back & Solomos cited in Temple & Young, 2004: 167). Temple and Young (2004) argue, ‘Such differences in power between languages also influence the translation of meaning’ (p. 167). In this relation, the way that I represented people with learning difficulties who speak English might have influenced the way that I see their social world through my language. In reducing the issues around language differential, before undertaking this research, I decided to improve my English language as my second language and I also involved my informants to understand their cultural and social needs.

Conclusion

This chapter explored my research methodology, identified the sources from which I obtained my data and described the methods and methodology involved in collecting the data and the research undertaken to address four research questions. It also described the main dilemmas and ethical issues of my research.

CHAPTER SIX- Living work: Life stories of six people with learning difficulties

Introduction

To address the first research question, ‘What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of the post-Valuing People White Paper, this chapter presents the life stories, particularly the real employment experiences of six people with learning difficulties. Simons (1998) argued that people with learning difficulties should have the right to represent themselves. Therefore, all six workers with learning difficulties represent their life stories in collaboration with me. I hope the stories are fluent. All informants agreed that these stories are authentic accounts of their experiences.

Robert Savage: A story of self-advocacy and work “My Life My Choice”

“My Life My Choice” is the name that Robert gave me for his story: ‘I want to let any reader of my story know that my life is my choice, not others choice’ because I am able to choose what I want to do in my life’.

Robert, who has Down’s syndrome, is 26 years old, the 2nd child in his family, and lives with his parents. He is a member of a self-advocacy group for people with learning difficulties in NORTHTOWN, and a member of Spark Theatre Company where he is learning how to act. He is doing part-time voluntary work at two different placements: doing office work in one and pricing clothes in the other. He also attends a Getaway club. This is Robert’s life story.

The early days

“I can’t remember about my childhood very much, but my mum said that I was born quite quickly and three weeks early on the dining room floor (laughing). So, they took

me to the hospital and a doctor said to them, 'Your son has got Down's syndrome and he will be mentally handicapped for the rest of his life'. They were shocked and took me everywhere for treatment. Somebody said to my parents, 'if you work hard with Robert, you will be proud of your son'. So, my parents did and they are proud of me.

Educational background

My parents took me to Village Green Mainstream Nursery School, then I went to Spring Mainstream Primary and Junior School where there were no resources for children with learning disabilities. So my parents helped me and I managed to get on all right. I enjoyed drawing, writing, reading, playing games, running, and sport days at school.

I went to Spring Mainstream Secondary School where there was a unit for people with learning difficulties. I coped extremely well with everything; I did many courses like Computer Skills that was my favourite because I learned writing and playing games on the computer. I went skiing, walking and climbing trees with other pupils.

I did some work experience in caring for elderly people at Primrose Hill Nursing Home where I put laundry away and I tidied rooms and talked to elderly people. I also worked at a lunch club for elderly people for a few months and I enjoyed that.

I enjoyed visiting Museums. I believed that those experiences assisted me in gaining many independence skills.

All my classmates and teachers were very kind but I got a little bit bullied. One of my friends bullied me into playing football, but I didn't want to and I became very upset with him. Some of them didn't accept me because I was a disabled person, but when they tried to bully me I ignored them.

At school I made five friends like Rose, and Jim. I had great times and I still remember them, but I have no contact with them because one of my friends died many years ago and other friends have gone separate ways.

Higher education

I left school when I was 16 years old. Then, I went to Northtown North, East, West, and South Colleges, Royal Art College, Bungalow and Town Farm. I did a lot of training in Literacy, Numeracy, Keyboard Skills, Maths, English, Visiting Places,

Typing, Computer Skills, Communication Skills, Gardening and Horticulture. I did NVQ Level One and Two in Horticulture and Gardening. I only got a certificate for Level One because it was practical, but NVQ Level Two was too hard and academic. I enjoyed working with animals, but I didn't want to do that job permanently because I didn't like it.

Starting work

I think employment is a good thing for people with learning disabilities. It is an opportunity for us to have the experience of doing voluntary work and to get paid employment. It is also good for us to earn money and also to make friends. People with learning disabilities prefer to have paid jobs rather than doing voluntary work.

Since I left college, I have been doing voluntary work in many placements for many years. My first job was office work in Halton Enterprise for four months, my second job was voluntary work at a charity, and then I got my current job at the self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities.

I found work at the Oxfam Depot by myself. I saw an advert on the wall of the employment centre. Then I applied and did the interview successfully. There was a depot for clothes and everything. They collected all the clothes from houses around the city. Then we sorted out good clothes from bad clothes, put them in bags and they were distributed to the different shops for sale. I worked four years there, and I moved to a charity shop where I work two days a week for two years.

I go to work by bus and I start my work at 9.30am and finish it at 4pm. I work on the top floor. My job is pricing clothes. I take some bags of clothes and put them on the table. Then, I have a list of prices for different makes. I look at the label on the garment and I find the price based on its make from the list. Finally, I put the ticket price on that. For example, if I want to price a shirt. I look at the label of the shirt. If the garment is from Topman, I look at the list and see the price for a Topman's shirt. If the price is £2.99, I take the £2.99 ticket and I put it on the shirt. Finally, I take the priced shirt to the shop floor for sale where I meet many customers. We have some regular customers and they know me very well. If the customers need some clothes, which they can't find, they call me. I go up-stairs and I find it and give it to them, and I enjoy helping the customers.

I like my job and my placement very much. Apart from me, five people with learning disabilities do voluntary work. Barbara is the shop manager, is a lovely woman and supports everybody. If I need something to know about my job, she explains it to me.

At break time, we drink coffee and tea with colleagues downstairs. I like talking to people, but not too much. Some of my colleagues like to talk too much, and when they want to talk to me like that I become tired and I ask them to leave. I don't like anybody to disturb me when I am working.

I would like to have a paid job. I like working because work gives me experience in the job market, helps me to meet people and to make friends and keeps me in worthwhile occupation. I don't get paid. I only get bus fares back. Most people with learning disabilities don't get paid. I think some employers don't like to employ us because we have learning disabilities. I also believe that if we have a paid job, this sometimes interferes with our benefits. So I think having a flexible work and benefits payment is a thing that most people with learning disabilities prefer to have.

Working at Northtown Self-advocacy group

I have been working at the self-advocacy group since it was established in 1997. I work two days a week: Tuesday and Thursday. I work from 10am until 4pm, but sometimes I work until 5pm when I have a meeting. My post is secretary, but I am personnel and fundraising officer as well. I do secretarial work, arranging meetings, taking calls, making appointments, writing notes, typing letters, and photocopying. I also help and support people with learning disabilities in writing and providing newsletters, providing some training and conferences for them. I am also speaker of the self-advocacy group and I talk about the group and people with learning disabilities everywhere. I have got 17 colleagues, 15 people with learning disabilities and two non-disabled people. I enjoy working in the office because the work environment is very good and the members help each other very much.

We have many phone calls from people with learning disabilities who want to join us, and also non-disabled people with different requests. They ring us to ask for some information about the group and I answer some of them, or transfer them to other people to talk. I make some calls to other organisations to arrange a meeting or other things.

Working at the self-advocacy group is very important for me. I think the self-advocacy group is important for all people with learning disabilities. Sometimes people aren't treated the same as everyone else in the community so self-advocacy groups help us to speak out for ourselves. To speak out for our rights. We don't want to be told what to do. We want to know about a lot of things then choose what we want for ourselves. We want to make our own choices about jobs, where we live, holidays, relationships and being ourselves.

We want to have the chance to show that we can live and work and be a part of the community the same as everyone else. We want to be important in our communities. We want to have independent lives. So, the self-advocacy group lets us speak out about everything in our lives like social life, accommodation, employment, benefit, day services, education, leisure activities and any issues for people with learning difficulties in society.

In the group, we write and produce a newsletter to tell people who we are, what we do, what we like, what we need and what we want. We have public meetings every three weeks, on the third Thursday of each month in Northtown Parliament in the Town Hall where we invite a guest speaker from Social Service or other organisations and we discuss some issues in the lives of people with learning disabilities. This meeting is open to everybody and all people with and without learning disabilities can come to the meeting.

Since I have been involved in the self-advocacy group, I have learnt lots of things from so many people. I attended some day conferences through the self-advocacy group. Last year, I attended a one-day conference at the Open University. I met some members of the self-advocacy groups from Canada and different cities in the UK. In the programme, a few people talked about their experiences in their groups. From our group two members of the group and I gave a presentation about the history of the group and what we are doing now.

I had some meetings with many students from different Universities and talked about the rights of people with learning disabilities. I asked them to treat us the same as everyone else in the community. I said, 'We want to be treated fairly, we want to talk and you to listen to what we say'.

National Assembly for Mencap

I was a delegate for National Assembly for Mencap for one year but they wanted me to work for them for another year. I was the representative for Yorkshire. I went to Northtown Mencap and other cities to discuss local issues for people with learning disabilities. I had many local meetings with non-disabled and people with learning disabilities and talked with them about different issues.

Mencap arranged a trip to London to attend the national meeting in 2002. I went to London to voice any concerns that I had got locally from the local meetings. Then, I presented all the local issues to the national meeting where we discussed some issues for people with learning disabilities like housing, jobs, education. The transport district was the next issue for the next meeting.

I am proud of myself, and my family are proud of me as a person with Down's syndrome

When I was born as a child with Down's syndrome, my parents were worried about my future life. They did lots of things for me to train me as an independent person in society. They encouraged me to attend some swimming courses in 100, 400, 800 meters distance, and I learnt to swim when I was 5 years old.

Since 1993 I have won 25 medals at various distances including 13 Gold, 6 Silver and 6 bronzes. My first medal was gold in a Special Olympics in swimming; I gained two bronze medals as well. The second gold medal was in swimming again in the International Olympics in Geneva in 1995. At that time, I was a member of the England team, and I got a gold medal in Special Olympics for the England team. I remember everybody was proud of me because I won and I got a gold medal for my country. They showed me on TV. My name was on the radio. My name and photo were in many newspapers like the Guardian. It was an enjoyable time in my life because all people looked at my gold medal and didn't see my face. I got most of my medals in swimming, some in football, and running.

My family is also proud of me because despite having Down's syndrome I have lots of activities to do in the self-advocacy group, a theatre company, and social club. My mother said, 'Robert, I'm proud of you because you are very busy all the time with your meetings for disabled people, helping and supporting people with learning disabilities'.

I am a Christian and a member of the Church Youth Club, Rosemary Rise Methodist Church, Boys Brigade, Neighbours Fan Club, Spring Sports Club, and the Spark Theatre Company where we meet every Friday from 10am to 3pm and we do workshops and drama productions.

Favourite Activities

I enjoy going to the cinema or the theatre once a week, going bowling and birthday parties with my friends from the Gateway Club. I enjoy going away on holiday with my family and go to my brothers and my grandma for tea once a week.

Every evening I do lots of activities. On Monday, I go to Mencap, helping people with learning disabilities, serving hot dogs, talking to people, and playing football are my activities there. On Tuesday, I go to the pictures. On Wednesday, I go to Gateway sometimes. On Thursday, if I have meeting for the self-advocacy group, I stay for the meeting but if not, I go swimming. On Friday, I watch TV and play games on my computer at home. On Saturday morning, I watch TV particularly sky programmes and my favourites are Neighbours because I am in the Neighbours Fan Club, Eastenders, Bad Girls, Emmerdale, and Coronation Street.

On Saturday afternoon, I go to the Northtown Shopping Centre for shopping or going to the cinema again. I go to Northtown Stadium every Saturday when it is the football season. I have got a season ticket and I like watching football match.

On Sunday, I go to the church to read the Bible,... and in the afternoon I ride my bike. I also go to the countryside with my family to walk. I enjoy spending time with them but I don't go out with them too much. I prefer to go out alone. I help my mum in setting the table, cleaning and tidying rooms.

I like writing and reading book and my favourite book is Harry Potter...I write lots of things about the TV programmes that I see every day. It isn't rubbish really, I am proud of my writing. It is neat and tidy.

What is good in my life?

I think there are many good things in my life that I am proud of myself including:

- **I am able to be independent.** I don't need any help from other people because I am able to do everything in my life like travelling on my own; helping in the

community, like tidying up the streets and helping older people; looking after and controlling my money and benefits; doing my own cleaning and ironing; making my own bed; going on my computer and working at the charity shop.

- **I am able to get out by myself.** I am able to go out for shopping, working, social activities and swimming. I have a very positive attitude about myself that I am able to do a lot of things in the community, but some of my friends haven't.
- **Having lovely parents and family.** I am independent in many aspects of my life because my parents gave me the opportunity to do my work at home. They looked after me very well and gave me a lot of training and support in getting independent. My parents' attitude is positive to me and they don't believe that I am a disabled person.
- **Looking after my health.** When I want to go out, I care for myself in travelling, eating, shopping, working and sport.
- **Helping other people like elderly and disabled people in the community is important for me, and I love it.**
- **Speaking to other people like grandmother, brother, parents, friends, and other people in the community without being shy.**
- **Going to the public places like theatre, cinema, church and stadium by myself, and I enjoy that.**
- **I am able to choose what I want to do, to wear, to buy, to watch and where I want to go.**
- **Having a sister in-law**
- **Having exercise like working in a drama group...and swimming.**
- **Going abroad, like America**

What is bad in my life?

I've had some bad experiences in my life that I wouldn't like to experience again including:

- **Getting depressed** when I am alone at home, if I have nothing to do, I get bored and I start to eat (when I am not hungry) because I want to be busy, when I have extra spare time and I am unable to use it, when my work is boring I get depressed and I feel very lonely sometimes.

- **Bullied by other people at school.** I am an adult, but sometimes people don't treat me like an adult because my face is different from other people.
- **Being put down by other people.** One Friday morning, when I wanted to catch the bus, I had no change. When I gave £5 to the bus driver, he became angry and threw some coins in my face and he put me down in front of other people for only 35p.
- **People's interfering.** Sometimes, some people tried to spoil my life. They get involved in my activity and work when I don't want their involvement. Sometimes, when I am walking or shopping, some people want to help me, when I didn't ask them for any help. Some people start kidding with me but I don't like them kidding me. I don't want people to do things for me that I didn't ask them to do.

Aspiration for the future

The most important thing for my future life is valuing people. I want to be important and to be treated with respect the same as everyone else. People must include us in the community. One of my friends who has a learning disability says we need more 'respite care' in the community but I disagree with her. I say we need to be counted the same as other people. We don't want to be isolated. We need more socializing services. We need to live in the community with other people.

I want a proper job with proper pay. I don't want a different placement every couple of months that leads to nothing. I want to have my own house somewhere in Rosemary".

Lisa Watkins: A story of work and the role of family "This is My Life"

'This is My Life' is the name that Lisa gave me for her life story, and repeated 'This is My Life' three times. She said, "This is a true story about my life. I want to inform readers who may read about my life in the future that we have learning disabilities but we are able to do a lot of things the same as people with no learning disabilities". Lisa is 25 years old, lives with her parents and has been doing voluntary work for many years

in different placements. Currently, she has no paid job but works full-time as a kitchen assistant. This is Lisa's life story:

Childhood and Educational background

'About childhood, I can't remember anything. My dad said when I was born I wasn't well and the doctor said to him, 'your daughter has learning disabilities and she needs your support in her life'.

My parents took me to Laurel Mainstream School, but the teacher couldn't give me support. Then they referred me to a special school where I learned reading, writing and there were some disabled children. So, my parents took me to the mainstream again because there was a special class for children with learning problems. I couldn't get extra lessons and support because that special class closed later.

At mainstream, I couldn't understand the lessons; I had no support from the teacher so a few months later, I came back to the special school again where I had some problems with my homework. My parents worked hard and helped me for hours to do my homework, sometimes I was too tired and it was hard and boring for me.

My parents took me to a mainstream senior school where there was a special class for people with learning problems in Maths, English, and Science, but later, that class was closed and I had no support from teachers.

I went to Dutchwood Special Secondary School where I did many courses like Cookery. I learned how to cook simple family meals and got a lot of skills like travelling independently, getting confidence and trips to Blackpool, Cleethorpes...they were very helpful to get confidence and relationships with my classmates.

I had some lovely friends and went out to Northtown Shopping Centre, but I was bullied by people sometimes. A boy bullied me, he swore at me and called me 'four eyes'. Then my sister came down the road and stopped it. Nobody bullied me after that. I enjoyed that school, and it was better than any other school in my life.

College

When I left school I went to Northtown Central College, Swallows Work Experience Units and Far House Day Centre. I did some courses like Computer, Life Skills, Literacy, Numeracy, Sewing, Health and Safety, Food Hygiene, NVQ Level One and

Two in Retail and Cookery. I enjoyed Life Skills and Cookery because I learned lots of things about shopping, washing, ironing, travelling by bus and tram and cooking in the kitchen.

Starting Work

I have been doing work experience in different placements through the Far House for many years. My first placement was a charity shop. I was doing retail, part-time for a few months. I didn't get wages and I got only bus fares, which was 70p. Then, I started my part-time work in a supermarket for three months. I was a cleaning assistant, and tidying, cleaning rubbish, and helping customers were my duties.

The next placement was another Supermarket where I worked part-time, three days a week for 12 months. I was a cleaning assistant and my duties were the same as at the other. Then, I worked part-time as a cleaning assistant for three months at Rose Hotel where I got only bus fares. After one year, I got a job at a care home to look after elderly people. I was doing laundry work for about three months and I left that job because I really didn't like it. It wasn't a very nice job and I didn't like the smells of the working environment with elderly people. So I went back to Far House and they referred me to work in catering.

I have been working in catering for 4 years. I work full-time (37.5 hours a week) as a kitchen assistant in the restaurant where I work from 8.30 in the morning and I finish it at 3.45 in the afternoon. I go to work by bus 82. I travel independently and I don't have any problem catching the bus.

Toasting bread, making salad, serving the customers at the counter and emptying the dishwasher are my duties. I like my placement and colleagues more than previous placements where there were 30 staff and they didn't support me. They were busy doing their jobs and had no contact with each other. But here only six staff are working with me. My manager and colleagues are non-disabled, good, kind and give me lots of support at work. I work with them in a small group and have no problem with them. If I need some help, they will do it.

I like my job because I do different duties in different days. On Monday I do washing in the pot wash. On Tuesday I prepare sandwiches. On Wednesday, I help the staff to check stock. Thursday and Friday are cleaning days and I help the staff to clean the tables, and floor in the restaurant.

I have achieved NVQ in cooking and food preparation Level One. My boss and I did a curry today and the customers thought I did very well.

At all placements that I have been working I don't get wages. I get only bus fares, which is 70p per day. I get DLA and JSA as well. For JSA I have to go to the Jobcentre every two weeks to sign the paper. My benefits aren't too much. In total, I get £68 a week.

A proper and permanent job is an important aspiration for my future life. A job is important to me because it would give me a wage, let me have more friends at work, no more signing on and I would belong to a group. I need some help to get a proper and paid job. I think Far House will help me to get it. If they don't, I can't get a paid job, because most employers don't like to give us a proper job. They don't understand us. They think we can't work very well. But we do, we do work the same as everybody. But they prefer to employ people with no learning disabilities.

Leisure Activities

When I go home I go to my bedroom to listen to music, radio or to watch TV. My favourite programmes are cooking, wildlife, mainly 'Animal Hospital', and football matches. I like animals very much. I have adopted a Tiger in Thailand through 'Care for the Wild' it's name is Tamara. I pay £20 a year for this. It is nice, isn't it?

My hobbies are swimming, cycling, reading, playing CDs, watching TV, writing on my computer, colouring, drawing, listening to music, playing with my niece and going to work. I go swimming with my friend who is from work and has got a little boy. I go and enjoy spending an hour with her at the swimming pool every Monday. I like dancing but I don't go anywhere to practice, I don't have anyone to go out or have a friendship with. Everyone has a few friends but I don't. I know some people with learning disabilities go to some social club like gateway but I don't. I don't have any chance to go out with other people. I only have contact with my friend from work. I don't have any social activity. I spend most of the time with my family, listening to music, colouring and writing in my bedroom at home. When I went to school, I used to go to some social club like People First but at the moment, I don't go to anymore.

I used to spend hours with my grandma at home; unfortunately she died a few months ago so I spend my time with my niece when she comes to our home. She is five

years old, and plays on my computer. I teach her Maths and English. I also go shopping with my sister on Saturday but I do some shopping from work when I need something. I help my mum, tidying the bedroom, making the bed, setting the table, toasting bread, and some preparation for dinner. At the weekend, I go to the countryside to walk with my parents when the weather is nice. I go to watch football matches at Northtown Stadium sometimes with my dad and I like it. I like to visit restaurants as well.

I like going on holiday abroad with my family. This year we went to Malta, the weather was warm and I went on the beach and on a jet ski for the first time. We visited lots of shops, restaurants, had a meal for mum's birthday and we were all excited.

Roy Watson: A story of work, losing a job and living with mother "Life of Struggle"

'Life of Struggle' is the name that Roy gave me for his story and said, 'Life of struggle because I worked very hard to get a paid job, then I lost it four months ago and I am trying to find a proper job again, all efforts are struggle'. He said, 'Ghasem are you going to publish my story in a book? I like it. I think I am going to be a famous person. Yes I'd like to see my story in a book to show my experiences to people.

Roy is 34 years old and lives with his mum. He worked in several placements for 18 years. Out of 18 years 13 years were paid work, full-time as a shop assistant in a greengrocery shop. He has been out of work for four months because his placement was closed down. Currently, he is looking for a proper job. This is Roy's life story.

Childhood

I was born on 12th March 1969. My mum said I was a difficult birth and I couldn't feed very well. Later the doctor said to my mum; "there is nothing wrong with your child". I seemed to be doing all right when I went to school.

Starting School

My parents took me to a mainstream nursery, and then for primary, senior and secondary education I went to West Hill Special School where I found reading and

writing difficult so I didn't like getting the practice and doing homework and I didn't let my mum help me.

I made some friends especially a young black girl was my friend. She had learning disabilities and I used to talk to her at school. She used to ring me at home. I asked her if she wanted to go to the cinema with me but she didn't come because her parents didn't let her come. They were very strict. I travelled to school by a special bus and the driver came to pick me up from home.

Higher Education

When I was 16, I went to East Notts College in Nottinghamshire and travelled by train. I did some courses like Car Maintenance; it was practical work, it wasn't reading and writing. So I enjoyed that, and because I found some friends there, but after college I lost contact with them.

An experience of losing a paid job

I started my work with my dad. He had a butcher's shop. I worked with him for a few years. I used to clean and wash down. My dad had a machine in the shop. I used to strip it down. I enjoyed that. I left the butcher's shop because my dad didn't want me to work with very sharp knives.

Then I went to a workshop where I made plastic parts for windows for a few months, it was easy to do and I liked it. Later, I went to Remploy where I made boxes and I enjoyed that for two years. Then, I went to another Remploy where they assembled wheelchairs for another two years. I did voluntary work at three placements.

I used to walk to the first Remploy because it was close to my house, but the second one wasn't near and I had to go by bus. Sometimes I did catch the wrong bus. So, my mum came with me to show me the right one. I had no problems catching the bus. Sometimes I forgot to get off the bus at the right bus stop. So I got lost.

After Remploy I wanted to work in two supermarkets. They needed some people to work. I went there with my mum. They put my name on the list and I didn't hear anything from them. They didn't give me a job because I am disabled.

After a few months Paul (the manager of supported employment) gave me a job at a greengrocery shop. When I was working there he came to the shop to see me. He gave

me a lot of support at work. But when I lost my job we rang Barbara and left many messages, but she hasn't responded yet. I think she is too busy and I am not important for her, no I am not important to Barbara. I feel very 'let down'.

I worked at the greengrocery shop for 13 years. I lost my job because that shop was closed down four months ago I don't know why. My boss said because the rent had gone up.

Before the shop closed down, I worked full-time as a shop assistant. I weighed bags of potatoes up, rotated fruit, and washed down. I swept up. I unloaded vans and lorries. I carried things to customers' cars if they were too heavy.

I was happy and liked my job very much because it was a paid job and earned money. My wage was good. It was the minimum wage, £4.10 an hour and it wasn't bad really. I could buy lots of things with my own money but I lost my job.

My workmates were good especially Nicola. I liked my workmates and Andy who was my boss and he left that shop for three months. I was very upset about it. He was my friend and I didn't want to miss him. Three months later Andy came back and I was very happy to work with him because he supported me a lot at work. He does ring me sometimes.

When Andy left, George came. I was worried. I didn't know the new boss and I didn't like to work there. I said to myself, 'if Andy moves to another place I'll leave my job.' Then my mum said, "Roy, wait and see how you go on". When George came to work, he wasn't good, he was very lazy and I wasn't comfortable with him. Andy was my friend and he always looked after me, he let me know right or wrong. If I wanted to put something wrong he showed me the right way. He didn't lose his temper; he explained lots of things to me but George didn't.

I started my work very early in the morning. I got up at 10 minutes to 6 in the morning. The shop driver picked me up on their way from Market. I started my work from 6.30 or 7 in the morning and finished it at 4 in the afternoon. Then, came back home by bus X30.

Since I've lost my job I've applied for jobs elsewhere (six placements), but I didn't hear from them. It is bad that they didn't answer my application even if they say, 'sorry we have not got any jobs at the moment'. It is nice to know that they have looked at my application. I just wasted my time. There are not so many jobs for me. All my workmates got jobs in a supermarket after two weekd. They don't give me a job and the chance you know, because I have learning disabilities and they don't like us. There is no

difference; I work as hard as everybody else. I have enough experience in a green grocery shop and I can work in many placements like that.

I got an appointment to have a group interview in a supermarket. My mum said to the manager, 'Roy wouldn't be any good with a group interview and could he have a one to one interview'. They said that they would let us know but they never have. A friend of my mum asked for me to work in a double-glazing place but they haven't anything at the moment. I left my name and I didn't hear from them.

I would like to have a paid job to earn money, go shopping with my own money, to have a girlfriend and live with my mum forever. I'd love to have a girlfriend but I don't. I talked to my mum many times. I asked my mum for a girlfriend. My mum says, "I can't pluck one out of the air". She said that she wanted to find the right one for me. She hasn't found her yet.

Social life and leisure activities

My parents divorced 16 years ago. I don't like my dad because he broke down his relationship with my mum and didn't care about my mum, sister and me. He also shouts at me for no reason and I don't like it.

When I worked I was very busy and I had lots of activities to do. When I came back from work I used to sit down and talk to my mum, helping her in cleaning the windows, washing up, vac, cleaning and tidying my bedroom. Since I lost my job, I am always with my mum and helping her at home.

My favourite activities are watching TV (football, cricket and hospital programmes), cleaning, cooking, shopping, swimming, gardening and going to the pub. I like playing football but I don't have any friends to play with. Before I played football with my friends but now I do not. Because all the lads were, getting older and they were going off with girls. There is a guy in front. He plays football, but I don't like to play with him because he treats me like a child. So I don't feel happy with him and prefer to stay at home. I used to go to Northtown Stadium to watch football matches, but I don't go now because the price has gone up and I only go to special matches with Paul.

At the moment I have two friends, a young man who worked for my dad (I go swimming with him for an hour on Friday and go to the pub on Thursday), and mother's friend who has got a bakery shop. He is a very nice person, married, has got two kids, and I go out for a drink at the pub with them on Saturday and Tuesday.

I used to go out with four friends before. Three of them had learning disabilities and one of them bullied me. We used to talk in a group but they left me out, and told me 'go away from the group and sit somewhere else'. It wasn't nice, was it? They used to say nasty things to me so I left them and I don't have any contact with them. I had another bad experience of bullying by a lady. I helped my friend some Saturdays. One day I was cleaning the shop and a lady in the shop wasn't very kind to me. I asked her what was wrong and she wasn't very sympathetic to me. I don't like people who bully me.

Before, I had a lovely dog for 20 years. She was a very good friend for me. I spent most of the time walking, watching TV and talking to her but she died six weeks ago. On Saturday, I go shopping with my sister who is married, and has a lovely 3 years old boy called Terry. When she comes to my house I play with Terry. I used to go shopping and buy clothes and CDs with my own money, but at the moment I am not working and I don't earn any money. I also sell lottery tickets for some charities because I got a certificate to do that and I like helping other people.

I go out for a walk and go on holiday with my mum when the weather is nice. My dad also took me abroad to Spain and Turkey. He is supposed to take me for a holiday every two-years but he hasn't.

Sally James: A story of work and living with friends

Sally is 39 years old. She lives with her friends in a homecare. She has been doing part-time voluntary work as a kitchen assistant in different placements for 5 years. Sally's hobbies are running, swimming, and gymnastics. This is Sally's life story:

Educational background

A professor in the hospital told my parents, 'give Sarah as many experiences of life as possible.' My parents took me to Sheep Road Mainstream Nursery School. At that time my mum was a head teacher in another mainstream school. After six months, I went to Healy Wood Special School where the head teacher told my mum, 'Sally will never read'. My mum worked with me everyday in writing and reading; I learned and enjoyed it very well.

Qualifications

When I left school I was 16. I went to Northtown Central College, King Cross, an Assessment Centre, Choir and Far House Day Centre. I did some training in Basic Typing, Keyboard Skills, English, Computers, Food Hygiene, Self Travelling Health and Safety; Literacy and Numeracy, Woodwork, Cookery and Independent Living Skills successfully. I made some friends and I enjoyed that.

Employment background

I have been doing voluntary work in many placements through Far House for 5 years. My first placement was Far House where I packed very sharp blades and suits for Richardson. Then they had a contract with the City Council. I worked full-time, cleaned and repaired baby's seats for them.

Far House moved me to Northtown General Hospital where I used to work as a kitchen assistant with W.R.V.S for about one year. We didn't have enough customers and the staff got tired and they decided to shut it down. Then they moved me to Northtown Royal Hospital, Spring Café and Forest Canteen and Buffet Services.

I worked in Northtown Royal Hospital like I used to do at the Northtown General Hospital for two years. Then, Far House moved me to work at a charity shop in a Northtown Shopping Centre where I now work on Monday and Thursday and count money for the charity for four months.

On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday I work at Spring Café where I have been working as a kitchen assistant for three years. I work from 9 in the morning and finish at 3pm in the afternoon. I go to work by bus 82 and go back home by the same bus. Sometimes I go back home by bus 83 and I cross a main road to go home, which is far from my house. But if I catch bus number 82, I do not have any difficulties crossing the main road to go home.

At Spring Café, I carry out some work duties, helping the staff on the cooking site, serving customers, helping the cleaning up, making soup, sandwiches, salads, and toasting bread. For making salads, I take lettuce, tomato, cucumber, and grated carrot from the fridge to the kitchen and use all of them and I make salad and mix them with sauce. Then I wash up everything in the kitchen.

I work with 8 colleagues, five people have learning disabilities and three are non-disabled. I like my manager and colleagues because they are nice and kind. I like my job

and I found it all right, but we do get busy at lunchtime, round about 12.15 to 12.30pm. I think the day we do get busy is Friday lunchtime, because usually lunchtimes quite a lot of office and building workers in this area come to the café for lunches.

Fred from Far House comes here to visit me to make sure that I am working well in the workplace. He also comes to see David who has learning disabilities and works three days here.

On Tuesday I work at Forest Centre where I work as a kitchen assistant and do the same duties as at Spring Café.

In all placements I do voluntary work and I don't get paid, I think it is because I have learning disabilities. I get my money from the City Council. I get wages of about £8 a week at Spring Café. They cannot give me more because I get DLA. My benefit goes to Silkwood House where I live. Then they give me £15 for spending money for travel to work and to go for a drink.

Living in Homecare

I have been living in homecare for many years. My mum died many years ago. When she died I was at Silkwood House. It was hard to hear that news. Before she died, she asked my dad to leave me at home. She said, "when I die there is no one for Sarah". First, I went to Island hostel where I lived for two nights. Then I moved to Silkwood House where I have lived with five residents for about 10 years. We are a very good family, no arguments we get on very well together, no fighting and are all very happy. One of the residents died last June. She was the oldest resident and very good.

At Silkwood House I live with Janet who is my best friend in my life. I know Janet from school. We have been together from 5 years of age. We used to go to the same school and she was my classmate. I used to visit Janet at her home and Janet came to our home many times. Janet's room is very close to my room. Most of the time, Janet and I go to town to look in the stationary shop and buy pens, bags, or books and we go back to Silkwood House. We spend a lot of time together.

I used to go on Saturday and Sunday to see my dad but now I only go for a day and return the same day. I go at the weekend to look after him. My dad lives in the countryside of Northtown and his house is far away and there is no bus to go. So I go to Northtown Shopping Centre by bus, then I wait for my dad to come; he picks me up

from there. I help my dad in cooking, making salad and giving his medication. Sometimes he forgets to take his medication on time so I give him a glass of water and his tablet.

We go out in the car everywhere, sometimes we go to Manchester Airport to watch aeroplanes coming, we go to the pub or restaurant for a drink and a meal and I like it. If I stay at the weekend in Silkwood House, my dad comes up to visit me on Sunday. Sometimes he comes for lunch and we have lunch together. He stays with me until 8-9 at night and he goes home. Sometimes, my brother comes with him. My brother is five years older than me, married and he has got two lovely children. My nephew is six and niece is 12 years old and I love playing with them.

The staff at Silkwood House are very kind to residents. They help us in cleaning, washing up, tidying up, cooking meals and things like that. I think Silkwood is better than previous hostels.

Spending spare time

I spend most of the time with my friends at Silkwood House. We go out to the theatre, cinema, and pub for a drink or a meal and go on visits to the countryside, seaside for holidays. This year we went on holiday to a place in Nottinghamshire where we were in a nice hotel for about one week, and we enjoyed that.

When I finish my work I go home and I listen to music in my room. Then I help the staff to prepare dinner. After dinner I watch TV. My hobbies are running, swimming and gymnastics. I am very interested in running, I went to the Special Olympics one year, and I got gold and a silver medal for running. When I lived with my parents I used to go to dancing class and a drama group as well but at the moment I don't have time and I am busy working from Monday to Friday. I really enjoy dancing and when I go to a pub I dance with my friends.

I like to go to the Gateway Club with my friends but I don't go. Because my ex boyfriend comes to Gateway. I don't like him. When I was 17 years old I had a boyfriend. I met him at Far House. I used to visit his house and he used to visit my house for about five years. We went out for a drink, a meal and cinema. I enjoyed that time. Another boy from Far House wanted me to go out with him. One day I went dancing with him and he stole my money. So my dad stopped it. Since that time, I haven't had any boyfriend.

I like going on holiday abroad. I have been to America, Canada, Holland, France, Spain, and Italy with my family, especially my dad, quite a few times.

Julia Martin: A story of work and living in residential care

Julia is 29 years old and lives in residential care with her friends. She has been doing voluntary work as a kitchen assistant in several placements and has had no wage for many years. She attends a Gateway Club and spends most of the time with her friends. This is Julia's life story:

Starting School

I was born on 18 January 1974. My mum said when I was born I couldn't walk until I was 4 years old. So she looked after me for many years.

I went to a special primary and secondary school, and I did some training in English, Maths, Science, Reading, Writing, Woodwork, and Cooking. My favourite was cooking because I learned how to cook. I enjoyed school because my teachers were very kind. I also made some friends and enjoyed playing with them.

Qualifications

I left school when I was 16 years old. Then, I went to a day centre and did some courses like Independent Living Skills and a Kitchen Assistant NVQ. I learned how to wash and iron my clothes, travelling independently, looking after myself, shopping, cooking, and working as a kitchen assistant.

Employment background

The first placement that I went to work in was Far House. I started my work at the Assembly and Packaging Unit. I worked two days a week but now I work only one day. When I worked at Far House, they referred me to Forest Centre to do voluntary work as a kitchen assistant in the canteen and buffet on Wednesday. I helped staff to provide fresh dinner, making salad, washing pots, serving the customers, cleaning the table and doing other jobs. A few months later, they asked me to work there for two days. I

worked with some people with learning disabilities. They were doing voluntary work as well. At that time, Far House referred me to Spring Café where I worked as a kitchen assistant only on Friday for two years. I did some duties the same as at Forest, but I did some extra work like making tea, coffee, coleslaw for sandwiches, cleaning the table, and helping my boss to make sandwiches as well.

At Spring Café, I liked my job, placement, and Tracy who was my manageress. She was very kind and gave me a lot of support at work. If I didn't know something she explained to me very well. My colleagues were good as well. I worked with 5 people, three of them had learning disabilities and two were non-disabled. They were very kind, gave me a lot of support and I enjoyed working with them.

At the moment I do voluntary work, five days a week in three placements: lunch club, Rose Nursery and Far House. On Tuesday, I work as a kitchen assistant at lunch club, which is next to Spring Café, with three people with learning disabilities. I work the same as at Spring Café, Washing Pots, cleaning and setting the tables, making the coleslaw and salad for sandwiches are my duties. I make coleslaw in the kitchen. I clean cabbage, onions, and carrots first. I grate carrots and onions and put them all in the container. I add a few spoons of salad cream and mix them together. Then, I put the coleslaw in the refrigerator. I wash the grater and knife, put them in the cabinet and clean the table as well.

I have a break with my friends, then I make some salad for sandwiches with some lettuces, cucumbers, carrots, and tomatoes. I clean them first. I cut lettuce, cucumber, and tomato and I put them in the separate containers. I don't mix them together like coleslaw. Then, I clean everything in the kitchen.

On Monday, Wednesday and Thursday I work at Rose Nursery where I started my work two months ago. I work from 8.30 in the morning and finish at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I do my job as a nursery assistant, which is different from other jobs. Helping the staff to provide food, playing and looking after the children are my duties. I like working with children. It is a very nice and interesting job. On Friday, I work at Far House at the packing unit. At all three placements I don't get a wage; Far House gives me £2.25 per day. I like to have a paid job but I don't. I don't know why. I think employers don't like to give me a paid job because I am disabled. I get DLA too. It isn't too much.

I go to work by bus everyday. I catch bus 95 from my house to the City Centre, and then I catch bus 22 from the Town Hall to work. I travel by myself and don't have any

problem travelling. Sometimes I use the tram, especially when I go to the city centre for shopping or going to Gateway Club.

Living in residential care

When I went to school, I lived with my mum, dad and sister. That time was very good. We lived together in the same house. We went out together and I liked that. My dad took my sister and me out for a ride. My dad had a car and we went out at the weekend. I was so happy to live with my family. Then, my parents' relationship broke down a long time ago and they live separately. I don't know why. They put me in residential care. It wasn't fair, was it? I didn't like the residential. I wanted to live with my family but they didn't like me. I see my dad and sister sometimes but not too much. I like to live with my mum but she doesn't like me. I don't know why. Maybe because I am disabled.

I remember when my parents put me in the residential care I had a very bad time. I didn't want to leave my family. I wanted to stay with them but they didn't want me. I missed my family and I didn't want to stay in residential. One lady came to me and introduced me to some residents who had learning disabilities. I didn't know them. Some of them were very severely disabled and in wheelchairs. They were very kind to me but I didn't like to stay with them.

In the first few days I didn't feel good at all. I just started to cry because that place was new for me and I just wanted to stay with my family. I couldn't sleep very well, I didn't like to eat anything and I didn't like to talk to anybody. I just kept crying and I was very upset about my family. I asked myself why my family was like that. They shouldn't have put me in the residential. My mum came to visit me a few times but after that she didn't come. She forgot me because she doesn't like me.

I have been living in residential for many years now and I like it. I found some friends there. Carol was my first friend who is a very nice girl, close to me and comes to Gateway Club on Monday. We are really good friends.

I feel that I have more freedom in residential. I can go anywhere and I enjoy spending time with my friends. There are some special times in residential and we have parties like birthdays. Next Friday is my birthday; Tina and some friends from Gateway are coming to my birthday party. For the party we have a birthday cake, chocolate, and drink.

The staffs in the residential are very kind and nice. Emily is my key-worker. She is a nice lady and kind to me. If I have some problems at work or anywhere she will help me. She sits and talks to me and sorts the problem out.

A few days ago I had a problem at Gateway. Nick bullied Carol. He is a very bad boy. Carol told me and I shouted at Nick and punched him because he treated Carol like a baby. All the people and staff watched us. I didn't want to fight with him but it was his fault, wasn't it? I care about Carol very much because she is my best friend and I don't want to see her unhappy. A few days later Tina from Gateway phoned Emily and told her about my problem with Nick. Emily talked to me about it and I explained what Nick did to Carol.

Sometimes, some families come to visit their children and bring something nice like toys, postcards, food, and chocolate. They spend a couple of hours with their children, and then go back home. It is nice isn't it? But my family doesn't come to see me because they don't like me. Sometimes we go on holiday and we spend a few days out of the residential with my friends, I like them very much but I miss my family as well.

Social activities

When I arrive home from work, I go to my bedroom. I open the window to get some fresh air, lie on the bed and listen to music. I watch any TV programme but my favourites are Coronation Street and Eastenders. Then I help the staff providing dinner and making salad. After dinner, I go out with my friends. Sometimes when I need money I go to the Post Office to get some money out for shopping or drink.

My hobbies are reading, writing, playing games on the computer, painting and colouring some shapes with my favourite colours (red, yellow and green). Most of the time Carol comes to my room in the evening and we sit and talk about something like what we do at work. Then we go out for a drink. I go swimming once a week and go to Gateway Club where I meet my friends, and dancing with Carol and Judy, who is a nice girl and lives in the same place as me. On Friday and Saturday evening we go to the pub for a drink and dancing, and I have a good relationship and I enjoy my life with them.

Sometimes I go to the pub with John if he isn't busy. John is my boyfriend, is a very nice boy and comes to Gateway. I met him at gateway two years ago. He asked me to marry him but I have to think about it. He loves me very much and I love him too. At

the weekend, I go to see John and his mum who is a very nice lady and kind to me. I enjoy spending time with them.

I go shopping to Northtown East Market and Netto supermarket with my friends, sometimes it's cheaper than other supermarkets.

I don't have any plans for my future life. I like working and want to marry John and go for holidays.

Sheila Davies: A story of work and the responsibilities of caring “This is Sheila’s story”

‘This is Sheila’s story’ is the name that Sheila gave for her story. Sheila is 46 years old, the first child of her family and lives with her mother and disabled sister. She has been doing voluntary work in several placements for 22 years. She works four days a week as a kitchen assistant. After many years experience she has never been paid. She cares about her family and friends and is very happy with her life. Sheila’s life story is:

School

I went to West Hill Special School. I didn't like school and doing anything. I played games, reading, writing, numeracy, painting and cooking.

Day centre

When I left school I was 17 years old. Then I went to three-day centres for a few years. I did some training in life skills, travelling, health and safety, literacy and numeracy, woodwork, food hygiene, and working in the canteen and kitchen. I met some of my school friends there and I enjoyed going on courses.

Employment background

After training I had some work experiences in a few placements. I worked in a Café in town for six months. I found that job through my friend who had learning disabilities. I did part-time voluntary work as a cleaning assistant and I left that job because I didn't like that place and my work was hard. Then, I did some part-time paperwork in the

office for three months. I packed envelopes and I liked it. It was an easy job to do. I left that job because that place was cold. My hip has some problems and I can't work in cold areas. So I went to Far House and I worked there for two years.

At Far House I did voluntary work, five days a week as a packing assistant and I packed blades and suits. They gave me £3 a day. I left Far House because I had no freedom to do what I wanted to do. I liked to go shopping but I couldn't. It wasn't very fair. I talked to my mum and she complained to Far House. They gave too much work. Then, they referred me to the Brick Lane Factory where I did voluntary work; two days a week, and seven months later I worked five days a week. My wage was £3 a day. I worked in the sorting line where the line came up and brought all the stuff like plastic bottles, glass and paper. I used to collect and sort the plastics out. I had to touch dirty bottles and glasses everyday and I didn't like it. It wasn't a nice job and I changed it after two years.

I went to the kitchen where my friend worked and I liked to work there. I did different duties like making tea, coffee, serving biscuits, cleaning and washing up. When I started my work in the kitchen I had to work with a man. He was deaf; he couldn't speak to me so I had no contact with him. When I wanted to talk to him I had to use sign language and I didn't know that but I learned it in the factory a few months later.

I worked 7 years in the Brick Lane Factory which caught fire and everything burned so it was closed down. Then, I moved to Rambert Street Café where I have been working for 4 years. First, I did office work like taking letters from one office to another and I cleaned the furniture in the office as well.

A few weeks later, they offered me work in the canteen in the café where I feel more comfortable; better than working in the office.

I come to work by bus. I don't have any problem catching the bus. Bus fares for disabled people have gone up from 35p to 40p and it isn't fair. We need a free bus pass for travelling.

I start my work everyday at 8.30am and finish it at 2 or 2.15 in the afternoon. I work four days a week. Thursday is my day off and I go shopping. I do voluntary work and I get £3 a day, £12 a week. I don't get a wage because people don't like to give me a paid job. I also can't earn more because I receive DLA, and if I get more wages, I lose my benefit.

I have been busy in the café. I make tea; coffee and serve people in the canteen. People come here for breakfast, drink and have a chat. If staff or people need lunch, they need to tell us in the morning. Then we provide sandwiches and some salad for their lunch. Lunchtime here is a very busy time. Many people come for lunch and a drink. I am very busy serving people for a couple of hours and I can't go out for a cigarette. Then, from 2.00 in the afternoon, I am busy washing all the cups; I sweep up the floor and clean the tables.

Sometimes when customers come to the café they ask for tea, biscuits...and give me paper money £5 or £10. So I get confused with their change. I never learned about money at school. I did some training with some paper money a long time ago. So I ask the staff to help me with the change.

Sometimes, people fight, and if the staff aren't here, I try to sort it out. If I can't, I will ask Peter to come and help me to sort it out.

The responsibilities of caring

I live with my mum and a disabled sister. When I was a little baby my dad and mum divorced. I want to know what's happened to him, my mum says my dad is still in Northtown, but I don't know where. I didn't ask my mum about it, all I know is that they split up. I don't want to go and see him in private. I might spend a few days with him when I get to know him.

My mum is now getting older. She is 70 years old. My sister is very severely disabled, doesn't speak, 44 years old and two years younger than me. She uses a wheelchair and needs much support to dress, move, around the house, eating and bathe. So, I help my mum. I do the beds for her and my sister. I clean the windows and bathe my sister.

I have one stepbrother who is two years younger than me and lives in Rotherham. He is married and has two girls. I love my nieces. I don't go to see my stepbrother anymore. He promised to see my disabled sister every week but he didn't.

I have had a boyfriend called Tim for 11 years. He has learning disabilities, works full-time at Remploy, and has a proper job. I love my boyfriend very much. Tim supports me and we have a good relationship. The first time I met him was at Gateway Club. He still comes to Gateway every Monday.

I got engaged to Tim on Good Friday a long time ago. I live half the week with Tim and half the week with my mum and sister. Tim's sister wants to see my mum, talk to her about providing some money for my marriage. I'd love to live with Tim forever. Tim asked me to live a whole week with him but I didn't accept, I can't leave my mum alone with a disabled sister at home. They need my support. I do worry about them. I don't know what will happen next. I asked Tim to wait. We need to wait really.

Social service wants to move my sister to care. If they do, I can live with Tim forever. But I am quite upset about mum. She is alone and I don't want to miss her. I must wait and see what's going to happen to me. When I am with Tim I clean his flat and do some work there. When he comes from work he needs me to look after him really. I am his wife and I have to help Tim.

Spare time

I go to Gateway on Monday, visiting friends, drinking, and helping the staff and Ann who is my friend. She has a severe learning disability and doesn't speak. She lives in a hostel. A few days ago her fingers were burned very badly in the hostel. I care about her and take her to a painting room at Gateway.

I watch TV. My favourite programmes are Emmerdale and Coronation Street. I don't like Eastenders. It is a rubbish programme. I go bowling, shopping and some trips on Thursday and weekend. I go to the pub with my boyfriend. Sometimes, I go to Doncaster to see some friends. On Sunday, I go to Sunday Market if the weather is nice. I buy some stuff for my family and boyfriend because everything is cheap in there.

I go on holiday with Tim, and my friends with Gateway. I have been to Spain, Scotland, and Wales and I enjoyed it very much.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the real life stories of six workers with learning difficulties. Chappell (2000: 40) argues that if the researchers want to know the views and experiences of people with learning difficulties, the people with learning difficulties are the best people to ask. I considered the views and experiences of the six informants. The chapter explored the views and the experiences of the informants related to their

childhood and adulthood including family relationships, educational experiences, employment experiences, social lives and their aspirations for the future.

In making sense of the stories and in order to explore the perceptions and employment experiences of these six workers, I will analyse the stories in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Post-Valuing People White Paper and employment for people with learning difficulties

Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question ‘What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of the post-Valuing People White Paper?’ by presenting a thematic analysis of the six life stories I have constructed and by analysing statistical information from case files of 200 employees with learning difficulties. As is mentioned in Chapter Five, to address this question, I conducted six life stories of adults with learning difficulties and reviewed 200 case files of employees with learning difficulties. I chose six adults who were identified by service providers as having ‘learning difficulties’ and who had been living and working in Northtown for many years. All information of 200 case files were constructed by the SEPs to support people with learning difficulties in getting employment. I took and coded the information from the case files using a form (see Appendix 4) in order to be able to analyse it using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. In reading through the transcripts a number of overarching themes repeated themselves. Some of these themes because of their gravity took centre-stage in my interpretation of what the informants were telling me. These included family relationship, employment and, educational and social experiences. In fact, the stories drew attention to various childhood and adulthood experiences which affected the informants’ lives, particularly their work. I have considered my data under the following headings.

- What work means to some people with learning difficulties
- The contemporary nature of work and citizenship
- Women with learning difficulties and work
- Employment barriers: the views of people with learning difficulties
- Social exclusion

What work means to some people with learning difficulties

The six stories have already been presented in Chapter Six. In this section, I attempted to paint a picture of what work means to informants. I analysed the six work

stories of the informants similarly to the way in which Olsen (2003) interpreted his data. Olsen gave meaning to work by considering what work is all about; the role of payment; the workers' relationship to colleagues; work ethics, and the person with learning difficulties' view upon his/her work. I expanded Olsen's categories from five factors to eight factors. I considered what work is all about in relation to wage, job duties, relation to colleagues, work ethics, job satisfactions, the person's view upon work and aspirations. I presented these factors in the vertical columns of table 7.1. I presented five conceptions of work in the horizontal columns of table 7.1. These conceptions are based on my interpretations from the six stories of work which I already explored in Chapter Six.

Table 7.1: What work means to some people with learning difficulties

	Work as development of the self-confidence	Work as a great opportunity to make friends	Work as a tool of self-esteem	Work as a pastime outside of residential care	Work as caring for people
What work is all about?	Taking responsibility in self-advocacy group Helping others, speaking out for rights Valuing people Developing self-confidence	Helping others Meeting friends at work Meeting new people	Lots of duties to do from 7am to 4pm Being useful Earning money Enjoying life	Experiencing new environments Doing some activities out of residential care	Serving people Lots of activity to do Caring for people
In relation to wage	No wage, voluntary work, things can buy	No wage, friendships	Was the minimum wage, good wage	No wage	I get £12 a week
Job duties	Arranging meetings, taking calls, making appointments, writing notes, typing letters, photocopying, and speaker of self-advocacy group Attending meetings and conferences	Toasting bread, making salad, serving the customers at the counter	Weighing bags of potatoes up, rotating fruit, washing down and sweeping up, unloading vans and lorries, carrying things to customers	Helping the staff on the cooking site, serving customers, helping the cleaning up, making soup, sandwiches, salads and toasting bread	I make tea, coffee and serve people in the canteen. We provide sandwiches and some salad for lunch.
The workers' relationship to colleagues	Having a lot of friends at work	Friendship with manager and a colleague out of work	Having close friendships with colleague and manager at work and out of work	Having a break with colleagues at work	Having contact with customers at work
Work ethics	To do lots of work and helping others	Helping others and getting help from others	To do lots of things every day and helping the customers	Helping the staff Looking after children	Sometimes, people fight..i try to sort it out
Job satisfactions	Very much Pride Independence Autonomy	Yes because of receiving lots of support at work	Very much Shopping by my money	Enjoys working but she likes to have a paid job	I feel more comfortable here
The person's view upon own work	A good thing An opportunity to get paid job	A good chance to have more friends at work	'Real job' paid job	Paid job	I am very busy serving people. I can't go out for a cigarette
Aspirations	Need a proper job with proper pay	Having a proper and permanent job	Marriage [A proper job]	Having a paid job and marriage	Having a paid job to marry boy-friend and to do shopping

Work as development of the self-confidence

Work provides self-respect and increases the self-confidence of people (Smits, 2004; PMSU, 2005; Beyer et al, 2004; Roulstone, 2004; Bass and Drewett, 1996; Lonsdale, 1990). Work as development of the self-confidence is seen in Robert Savage's story because work is seen by Robert mostly as a resource of developing his self-confidence through self-advocacy group. Work in a self-advocacy group as secretary, personnel and fundraising officer helped further the development of the self-confidence by the way that Robert speaks out for himself and others as speaker. When Robert explains about his work:

I do secretarial work, arranging meetings, taking calls, making appointments, writing notes, typing letters, and photocopying. I also help and support people with learning disabilities in writing and providing newsletters, providing some training and conferences for them. I am also speaker of the self-advocacy group and I talk about the group and people with learning disabilities everywhere.

he presents his role as being that of a vital person who runs the self-advocacy group to value people. He introduces his work environment as a very good in sense of supporting all members of the self-advocacy group. Robert explains that he does not get a wage, but he enjoys helping other people. Robert's work consists of writing and producing a newsletter to tell non-disabled people who they are, what they do, what they like, what they need and what they want. Robert and other members of the group have a public meeting every three weeks, in Northtown Parliament in the Town Hall to which they invite a guest speaker from Social Services or other organisations and discuss issues affecting the lives of people with learning difficulties. Robert describes how joining the self-advocacy group, becoming a delegate to the National Assembly for Mencap and talking about his experiences there has enabled him to gain many skills that have improved his self confidence. Robert would like to get paid employment in the future and he hopes and believes that working with the self advocacy will help him achieve his goal.

Work as a great opportunity to make friends

Making friends and social contact are important advantages of work for people with learning difficulties (PMSU, 2005; Beyer et al, 2004; Norouzi, 2004b; Simons & Watson, 1999; McConkey, 1998). In this research, for Lisa Watkins, work provides the

opportunity to make friends and have a social life. Workplace is the only place where Lisa has the opportunity to make friends. At the age of 25, Lisa lives with her parents who take a very protective attitude towards her. Consequently she is involved in very few activities outside of the parental home. However, through her 'voluntary' work at a café, she gains a sense of being an important and valued member of a team, receives training leading to Level One NVQ qualifications, and also gets the chance to meet new people. Having a proper and permanent job is an important aspiration for her future life. A 'Real job' for Lisa would mean paid, rather than voluntary employment for, as she states 'A job is important to me because it would give me a wage, let me have more friends at work, no more signing on (*fortnightly at the Jobcentre*) and I would belong to a group.' Lisa recognises that gaining a paid job is difficult for her because she has 'learning difficulties'. Therefore, she adds that she needs some help to get a paid job.

Work as a tool of self-esteem

Work increases the self-esteem of people (PMSU, 2005; McConkey, 1998). For 13 years, Roy Watson worked full-time at a greengrocer's doing such jobs as weighing potatoes, rotating fruit, washing and sweeping up, unloading produce and carrying shopping to customers' cars. Roy earned the minimum wage, which he found was adequate for his needs. He found his job very satisfying, it gave him the independence he valued and contributed to his positive sense of self esteem. Unfortunately Roy lost his job and despite applying for six posts had failed to gain further employment. Roy's aspirations are to get a paid job, to be able to go shopping with his own money, to have a girlfriend, and to live with his mother forever.

Work as a pastime outside of homecare

The stories I have placed under the heading 'Work as a pastime outside of homecare' concern Sally James' and Julia Martin's stories who live in homecare, but I only give Julia Martin's story as an example. For Julia 'work makes time go by' as Olsen (2003: 13) puts it. Julia Martin, a 29 year old woman who has lived in home care most of her life, tells her story. First, she explored her bad feelings and experiences at the time when her parents put her into residential care. Although she was unhappy about this, she had no choice and, therefore, had to find ways to cope.

Julia has been doing voluntary work in different workplaces for many years. Currently, she works five days a week, in three workplaces with different duties. On Tuesday, she works as a kitchen assistant at a lunch club, making tea, coffee, coleslaw, cleaning and helping to make sandwiches. On Friday, she works at the packing unit at Far House packing sharp blades. On Monday, Wednesday and Thursday she works as a Nursery assistant where her duties include helping the staff to provide food, playing and looking after the children. At all three workplaces she does not get a wage and she only receives bus fares. Julia explains that she has a break with her colleagues at work and she enjoys working with them because they are very kind and give her a lot of support. However, she would prefer to have one paid job and believes that she is unable to get one because of her disability. At present, she receives benefit and, consequently feels able to make few plans for her future, although she would like to marry her boyfriend. For Julia, in her current circumstances, work is a way of passing time outside of residential care.

Work as caring for people

Caring for people is an important key factor in this story. Sheila Davies has been doing voluntary work for more than 22 years. Currently, she works as a kitchen assistant at Rambert Street Cafe making tea, coffee, serving people in the canteen, providing sandwiches, and salads; and also washing up. She does not get a wage and only receives £12 a week. She believes if she earns more she will lose her benefit. Supporting colleagues and the customers are very important for Sheila at work. She describes lunchtime as a very busy time for her job. Sheila works four days a week from 8.30am to 2.15pm and is a key team member whose absence would be noted. Sheila lives with her 70 years old mother and a disabled sister who is 44 years old and needs support to dress, move around house, eating and bath.

Tim who has learning difficulties has been Sheila's boyfriend for 11 years. They would like to marry but are unable to until Social Services can move Sheila's sister to care and Sheila can offer her boyfriend the support he needs. As she says, 'When he comes from work he needs me to look after him really. I am his wife and I have to help Tim'. Sheila attends The Gateway club on Monday, visiting friends, drinking and helping the staff and other people with learning difficulties. Sheila always helps Ann

who has severe learning difficulties. Sheila cares about Ann very much and takes her to a painting room at The Gateway.

The stories show that work has different significance and meaning for the various informants, although all aspired to a paid job.

I will now move on to address the question: What is the employment situation of people with learning difficulties?

The contemporary nature of work and citizenship

Employment is a social right for every citizen although most people with learning difficulties are excluded from (PMSU, 2005; Beyer et al, 2004; Norouzi, 2003a, 2004c; Roulstone, 2004). Exclusion from employment is one of the principle barriers to social inclusion (Riddell & Banks, 2005: 59). Before considering the employment situation of people with learning difficulties involved in this study, I will explore the concept of citizenship as an important issue for disabled people. Marshall (cited in Kay & Tisdall, 2003: 21) defines citizenship as ‘...as status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.’ Law (cited in Lawson, 2003: 118) argues that people’s conception of citizenship consists of a number of roles, including a work role, consumer role, social role and domestic role. Similarly, Griffiths (1994) argues that adult status entails:

Personal autonomy (full responsibility for one’s own life), productive activity (economic self-sufficiency), social interaction and community participation (taking an ‘adult’ role in society), and roles within the family (being a non-dependent son or daughter, a spouse or a parent) (Cited in Lawson, 2003: 118).

Marshall (cited in Oliver, 1996: 45) notes the history of citizenship as ‘The achievement of certain rights’ and described three elements of citizenship: ‘civil, political and social’ (cited in Barton, 1993: 240). Walmsley (1992) argues that the civil, political and social rights do not appear to reflect the experiences of people with learning difficulties. She emphasises that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century citizenship rights developed for the majority of people in society. However, those with learning difficulties were marginalised from their rights to work because they were perceived ‘as unable to work’ (p. 222). If one of the UK government’s objectives in improving the quality of life for people with learning difficulties is ‘To enable more people with

learning disabilities to participate in all forms of employment, wherever possible in paid work and to make a valued contribution to the world of work' (DoH, 2001: 26), why are many of them living in poverty and their employment outcomes are low? (PMSU, 2005: 50). Before, considering the reason for their social exclusion, I will consider the contemporary nature of work of:

- Six workers with learning difficulties
- 200 employees with learning difficulties

The contemporary nature of work of six workers

Working in low-status occupations (low skilled jobs): The six stories showed that most informants worked in low skilled and low paid jobs. Regarding the current jobs of informants, at the time of the study, one person who was a shop assistant had recently lost his job and, between them, five people had nine jobs¹⁷, for example, Sally James stated:

On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday I work at Spring Café where I have been working as a kitchen assistant for three years. I carry out some work duties, helping the staff on the cooking site, serving customers, helping the cleaning up, making soup, sandwiches, salads, and toasting bread.

Regarding their previous jobs, the stories showed that, before obtaining their current positions, the six informants had experienced 25 jobs: six jobs as kitchen assistants; six as cleaning assistants; three as office workers; two as packaging assistants; and two as shop assistants. Only females were employed as kitchen assistants. Lisa Watkins, for example, stated:

I started my part-time work in a supermarket for three months. I was a cleaning assistant, and tidying, cleaning rubbish, and helping customers were my duties. The next placement was another Supermarket where I worked part-time, three days a week for 12 months. I was a cleaning assistant and my duties were the same as at the other. Then, I worked part-time as a cleaning assistant for three months at Rose Hotel where I got only bus fares.

¹⁷ Lisa Watkins was a kitchen assistant in a restaurant. Sheila Davies was a kitchen assistant in a café. Julia Martin had three jobs as packaging assistant, nursery assistant and kitchen assistant. Robert Savage had two jobs as office worker, and pricing assistant. Sally James Murray had two jobs as counter assistant and kitchen assistant.

Therefore, the stories support the findings of other research which showed that most people with learning difficulties who were employed worked in low-status occupations or low skilled jobs such as kitchen assistants and cleaning assistants.

Overall, the stories showed that the occupational status of informants was low. The Disability Rights Commission (2004: 18, paragraph 2.4) suggest: 'Do not assume that people with learning disabilities cannot be valuable employees, or that they can only do low status jobs'. Whilst I strongly agree with DRC (2004) I wondered why informants were employed in low skilled jobs. Was it because of their individual impairments or was it related to other factors? The reason will be investigated by considering the view of people with learning difficulties in this chapter and the view of employers and SEPs in Chapters Eight and Nine. This study emphasised that most of the employees with learning difficulties were assistants to somebody. They were not employed to work on their own. In what follows further analysis of the six stories is used to address these issues.

Unpaid jobs: The stories showed that most informants had unpaid jobs. At the time of the study, one person, Roy, had recently lost his paid employment. He had received the minimum wage. The other 5 informants, who had 9 jobs among them, were working 'voluntarily'. Three had received £12 and less a week, and the others received bus fare which was 70p per day.

In all the placements, I do voluntary work and I don't get paid.

(Sally James)

Regarding previous employment, six informants had experienced 25 jobs. All jobs were unpaid and the informants had only received bus fares.

I worked in a Café in town for six months.—I did part-time voluntary work as a cleaning assistant.

(Sheila Davies)

The stories showed that all informants were unpaid and receiving benefits. Therefore, this study supports the findings of other research which showed that most people with learning difficulties had unpaid jobs and received benefits.

While paid employment is one of the most important social rights for every citizen, the results of this research highlighted that all informants were excluded from earning a 'good' wage. Even more, apart from being excluded from paid employment, they are

excluded from the benefits of having paid employment, such as social identity and social activity (Carr, 2004: 184).

Full/part-time division: It has already been highlighted in Chapter Three that the majority of studies have found that most people with learning difficulties who were employed worked part-time. However, Roulstone et al (2003) noted that most people with learning difficulties worked full-time. The stories showed that at the time of the study, five of the six informants were working. In relation to the number of working hours, there were two full/part-time divisions: the full/part-time division based on the jobcentre definition¹⁸ and the full/part-time division according to the employers¹⁹. Based on the jobcentre definition, all five informants worked full-time, but according to the employers' definition, Lisa Watkins had a full-time job and the other four informants who had taken eight jobs between them, were part-time.

Regarding the previous employment, six informants had had 25 jobs between them. Based on the jobcentre definition, all informants worked full-time, but according to the employers, two informants worked full-time and the others were part-time.

Length of service with employers: Beyer et al, (2003: 25) reported that 50% of the sample in their study indicated that they had been employed in SEP for up to ten years. Similarly, Reid and Bray (1998) reported that, in New Zealand, most people with learning difficulties were in their current jobs for between a few months and 20 years. The stories indicated that regarding the period of service with the current employers, until losing his job, one person had been working for an employer for 13 years. The other informants had different experiences. The shortest period of service with the current employer was for Sally James and Julia Martin who had both been working with their new employers for 4 months and the longest period of service was for Robert Savage who had worked with his employer for 72 months. In addition, the stories showed that the average period of service was 2 years plus.

¹⁸ According to the jobcentre, a person who claims benefit and works 16 hours or more is regarded as full-time, and if the partner of the person who is claiming benefit works 24 hours or more, he or she is regarded as full-time. If the person does not claim benefit and works 30 hours or more, he/she is regarded as full-time (phone interview with Carol, March 2003).

¹⁹ When I asked for some information about Full/part-time workers from some employers through the Northtown Local Authority and two supported employment agencies, they provided information about some full-time and some part-time employees.

Regarding the period of service with previous employers, the six informants had worked with 25 employers before getting their current jobs. The longest period of service was from Roy Watson who had worked for 13 years with one employer. Sheila Davies worked with one of her employers for 84 months and most informants worked with their employers for 12 months or less.

Overall, regarding the period of service with previous and current employers, the shortest length of service with all employers was that of Julia Martin with three and half years, and the longest was that of Roy Watson with 18 years experience. Therefore, although the informants had a significant period of continuous employment, they had worked for a number of employers. The six informants had experienced 34 employers over a few years. This showed that the reality of employment for people with learning difficulties was far from stable. For example,

I started my part-time work in a supermarket for three months. I was a cleaning assistant, and tidying, cleaning rubbish, and helping customers were my duties. The next placement was another Supermarket where I worked part-time, three days a week for 12 months. I was a cleaning assistant and my duties were the same as at the other. Then, I worked part-time as a cleaning assistant for three months at Rose Hotel where I got only bus fares. After one year, I got a job at a care home to look after elderly people. I was doing laundry work for about three months and I left that job—so I went back to Far House and they referred me to work in catering—I have been working in catering for 4 years. I work full-time (37.5 hours a week) as a kitchen assistant in the restaurant—at all placements that I have been working I don't get wages. I get only bus fares, which is 70p per day.

(Lisa Watkins)

This research revealed firstly, that the reality of employment for people with learning difficulties was not stable and over a few years they had to experience new employers and workplaces. In fact, the findings showed that people with learning difficulties had little autonomy in choosing jobs and placements. Others, such as support workers or employers decided where informants work. Therefore, this study supports the Roulstone (2004: 195) study which noted that people with learning difficulties faced difficulties in accessing and keeping employment. While having autonomy is one of the important rights of every citizen, most informants in this study had little autonomy.

Secondly, having work experience affected the length of service with employers and also the chances of people with learning difficulties of getting paid jobs (Aston et al, 2005). Providing work experience is very helpful when it comes to getting paid

employment (Beyer et al, 2004). The majority of informants who had no work experience were unable to find jobs and those who had participated in work experience at either school or college had managed to find jobs. This research supports the findings of Aston et al (2005) and Beyer et al (2004). It is suggested that it is the responsibility of school, college and supported employment agencies to provide suitable work experience for people with learning difficulties.

Segregated or non segregated workplaces: It has already been reported in Chapter Three that some people with learning difficulties worked in segregated placements. I found that most of the jobs my informants had had were in non-segregated settings. At the time of the study six out of nine workplaces were not segregated and, with regard to previous employment out of 25 workplaces only seven were segregated. However, informants were excluded from full participation with their non-disabled workmates and were often segregated. This meant they had more relationships with other workers with learning difficulties than with their non-disabled colleagues. Therefore, this study supports the findings of other research which showed that most people with learning difficulties were excluded from mainstream workplaces.

Unsatisfactory jobs: It has already been noted in Chapter Three that job satisfaction increases the chances of people staying in the job. The stories showed that out of the six workers, only Roy Watson had been satisfied with his job. He also had a supportive manager and equally supportive colleagues at work.

I was happy and liked my job very much because it was a paid job and earned money. My wage was good. It was the minimum wage, £4.10 an hour and it wasn't bad really. I could buy lots of things with my own money but I lost my job...my workmates were good especially Nicola. I liked my workmates and Andy who was my boss...I was very happy to work with him because he supported me a lot at work. He does ring me sometimes.

The other five informants were not satisfied with their jobs because they were unpaid and insecure. For example, Robert Savage stated:

I want a proper job with proper pay. I don't want a different placement every couple of months that leads to nothing.

Schneider et al (2004: 28) reported that employees with learning difficulties in their study had little choice in their actual job. The stories also showed the fact that most informants had no autonomy to decide whether to retain or resign their jobs. It was the

employers who had decided if the person stayed or to left employment every few months or years. However, despite their exclusion from paid jobs in the community, all informants were happy about their current work environments. Firstly, they had supportive managers and colleagues. For example, Julia Martin stated:

At Spring Café, I liked my job and placement, and Tracy who was my manager. She was very kind and gave me a lot of support at work. If I didn't know something she explained to me very well. My colleagues were good as well. I worked with 5 people, three of them had learning disabilities and two were non-disabled. They were very kind, gave me a lot of support and I enjoyed working with them

Secondly, as mentioned above, the job gave them some benefits: friendship, skills, and responsibilities.

Regarding previous jobs, the stories indicated that most informants were not satisfied because they were unpaid and because they did not like their workplaces. Lisa Watkins, for example, stated:

I got a job at a care home for elderly people...I was doing laundry work for about three months and I left that job because I really didn't like it. It wasn't a very nice job and I didn't like the smells of the working environment with elderly people.

If non-disabled workers are not satisfied with their jobs, what would they do? Would they continue working in a job in which they have no interest? Perhaps not. They have the autonomy to make a decision to stay or to leave and seek employment elsewhere. Do workers with learning difficulties have the same chances as well as non-disabled workers? The PMSU (2005: 49) notes that disabled people have largely the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens. However, the stories gave a strong message that the informants had no autonomy. They had fewer options than their non-disabled colleagues. Because the job opportunities were very limited, if they were to leave the job, they might not be able to get another job easily (see Roy Watson's story).

Theoretically, all disabled people are citizens and have equal rights and legislation has been developed to protect disabled people in general and those with learning difficulties in particular from any discrimination and victimisation (PMSU, 2005; the 1994 DPEA, DDA 1995, the 1996 Regulations, DCR Act 1999, the Employment Act 2002, the 2004 Regulations, DCR Act 2004 and Valuing People, 2001). As Maria Eagle, Minister for Disabled People stated:

I believed that young people with learning difficulties and disabilities have a right to lead rewarding and independent lives (DfES, 2005: Foreword).

However, the reality shows the opposite. The six stories show a lack of stability in employment, little autonomy in the work place and low satisfaction with the fact that they were not paid the full wage for the work. Despite legislation in affording certain rights to people with learning difficulties, and the fact that people with learning difficulties can develop 'the skills required of active citizens' (Walmsley, 1991: 221; PMSU, 2005), they are excluded and marginalised in terms of their rights (Goodely, 2003; Hughes, 2004; Hasler, 2004; Carr, 2004; Walmsley, 1991; Roulstone, 2004). In what follows an examination is made to see whether the experience of the six case study informants was repeated amongst a larger sample of 200 people using supported employment services.

2. The contemporary nature of work of 200 employees

Above consideration was given to the life stories of six people with learning difficulties. In this section an analysis is carried out of 200 case files for people with learning difficulties constructed by SEPs to support them into employment. This analysis provides a wider picture incorporating the files of four supported employment agencies. It should be remembered that these are people who have used employment services and this still remains the case for a minority of people with learning difficulties. So, although the data will point to a degree of disadvantage compared to the general population, the 200 in this sample are amongst the privileged people with learning difficulties. Given the fact that the data is likely to be less than representative of people with learning difficulties as a whole and that it only examines four agencies it is likely to be in many ways inadequate in terms of its generalisation potential and in meeting the standards of statistical testing. As such descriptive statistics are used to examine: type of employment; paid v's unpaid employment; full time v's part time work; length of service; working hours; segregated and non-segregated work and issues relating to gender. In examining the distinction between individual and structural factors in Chapter 3 (see page 65) it was argued that the distinction was being used as heuristic. The interaction between various individual experiences and structural policies and rules made any form of analysis of causation problematic. As such in the following analysis the issue of causation that might have been applied using measures of association or

tests of significant relationships between variables have been resisted. Instead the data is later examined in terms of the four stage analytic approach outlined in Chapter 4 (see page 84).

Working in low-status occupations (low skilled jobs): This study showed that most informants worked in low skilled jobs. These covered thirty-nine job titles for the 200 employees (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Job titles for 200 employees with learning difficulties

Job titles	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid		
Kitchen Assistant	40	20.0
Recycling Assistant (Shop floor worker)	26	13.0
Shop Assistant	21	10.5
Cleaner	10	5.0
Gardener	10	5.0
Warehouse Assistant	7	3.5
Production Worker	7	3.5
Factory Operative	7	3.5
Machinist	6	3.0
Care Assistant	5	2.5
Bar Assistant	4	2.0
Clerical Assistant	4	2.0
Customer Service Worker	4	2.0
Waitress	4	2.0
Labourer	4	2.0
Box Maker	4	2.0
Shelf filler	3	1.5
Equipment Maintenance Assistant	3	1.5
Administrate Assistant	3	1.5
Laundry Assistant	2	1.0
Driver's Assistant	2	1.0
Internal Post Worker	2	1.0
Porter	2	1.0
Urban Ranger	2	1.0
Car Valet Assistant	2	1.0
Lorry Crew	2	1.0
Domestic Assistant	2	1.0
Theatre Assistant	1	.5
Hairdressing Assistant	1	.5
Refuse Operative	1	.5
Packaging Assistant	1	.5
Befriended Person	1	.5
Chef	1	.5
Patient Assistant	1	.5
Trolley Collector	1	.5
Car Park Attendant	1	.5
Library Assistant	1	.5
Counter Assistant	1	.5
Tyre Fitter	1	.5
Total	200	100.0

Among the thirty-nine jobs, kitchen assistant had the highest frequency, 20%. This was followed by recycling assistant, 13%; shop assistant 10.5%; and cleaner and gardener, 5%. There were 12 jobs in which only one person was employed and a further 8 which employed just two of the 200. Over half of the sample (53.5%) were employed in five jobs (kitchen assistant, recycling assistant, shop assistant, cleaner and gardener) demonstrating a lack of breadth to employment opportunities for the sample.

Unpaid jobs: The data show that out of the 200 employees, 49% were paid and 51% were unpaid. DRC (2004) asserts that it is pleasing that rates of employment among disabled people have risen in recent years as more and more employers have adopted better employment practices. However, although 49 percent of people with learning difficulties in this research had paid employment, this is not generally the case. Out of the 200 employees with learning difficulties in the sample 26 were from MAP Workstep Programme and all 26 were paid. Moreover of the 49% of those paid a good proportion, earned less than the minimum wage (Beyer, et al, 2004; Bass & Drewett, 1996; Secker et al, 2003). Table 7.3 shows that out of the 200 adults, 50 % received nothing hourly, 6% received less than the minimum wage²⁰ (£4.25), 17% received the minimum wage and only 27% received more than the minimum wage (£4.50-£5.50). All employees from the MAP Workstep programme earned at least the minimum wage.

Table 7.3 Hourly wages of 200 employees with learning difficulties

Hourly wages	Frequency	Valid Percent
Nothing	100	50.0
Less than Minimum Wage (Less than £4.25)	12	6.0
Minimum Wage (£4.25)	34	17.0
More than Minimum Wage (£4.30-£5.50)	54	27.0
Total	200	100.0

Overall, this study showed that most employees (50%) received nothing. However, among people who were paid, most of the remaining employees received more than the minimum wage (27%). The data do not support the findings of Beyer, et al (1999, 2003, and 2004) which showed that most people with learning difficulties who are employed receive the minimum wage or less.

²⁰ The minimum wage was £4.25 at the time of the research since when it rose to £4.85 from 1st October 2004.

It should also be said that the data on the 26 MAP Workstep employees in the sample were repeated in further analysis in terms of consistency in meeting the definition of employment as real jobs for real wages. More will be said of this in what follows.

Full/part-time division: Based on the jobcentre definition, out of the 200 employees, 35.5% worked part-time and 64.5% worked full-time. Thirteen percent of the 200 employees were from the MAP Workstep programme. All of them worked full-time. According to the employers, 53.5% worked part-time and 46.5% worked full-time. 88% of the employees from MAP Workstep programme worked full-time. The situation with the 200 employees supports the stories that overall, according to the employers, most workers with learning difficulties worked part-time. The research, therefore, does not agree with the Roulstone et al (2003) study which showed that most people with learning difficulties worked full-time. It does, however, support the findings of the Beyer et al (2004) study which argued that most people with learning difficulties, who were employed, worked part-time.

Length of service with employees: This study showed (see Table 7.4) that out of the 200 informants, 34% have been working for 12 months and less. The shortest period of service with the current employers was 15 days: that applied to six people. The longest period of service was 216 months (18 years) in the case of one person only.

Table 7.4 The length of service with the current employers for 200 adults with learning difficulties (in month)

The length of service	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than 6 Months	31	15.5
6-12 Months	37	18.5
13-36 Months	59	29.5
37-60 Months	25	12.5
61-84 Months	27	13.5
More than 84 Months	21	10.5
Total	200	100.0

This study showed that the period of service of most informants (66%) was more than one year and that they had a significant period of continuous employment with their current employers. Therefore, the current study supports the findings of other research

which showed that the period of service of most employees with learning difficulties was more than one year (see Table 7.5).

Eighty nine percent of MAP Workstep programme employees worked with their employers for more than 5 years. In addition, this study showed that long term employment (i.e over a year) was almost always paid employment. All Workstep employers were paid. However, most people who had a shorter period of service were unpaid.

Out of the employees who had been working more than 84 months (7 years) with their current employers, most of them (76%) had paid employment with the remainder doing voluntary work. In addition, out of the people who had been working with their current employers for less than 6 months, only 23% had paid employment (see Table 7.5).

Table 7.5: Time with current employer (in month) and Type of Work

Time with current employer (in month)	Type of Work		Total %
	Paid (%)	Unpaid (%)	
Less than 6 Months % N=31	22.6 (7.1)	77.4 (23.5)	100.0 (15.5)
6-12 Months N=37	40.5 (15.3)	59.5 (21.6)	100.0 (18.5)
13-36 Months N=59	50.8 (30.6)	49.2 (28.4)	100.0 (29.5)
37-60 Months N=25	56.0 (14.3)	44.0 (10.8)	100.0 (12.5)
61-84 Months N=27	59.3 (16.3)	40.7 (10.8)	100.0 (13.5)
More than 84 Months N=21	76.2 (16.3)	23.8 (4.9)	100.0 (10.5)
Total N=200	49.0 100.0	51.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

In addition, in this study, the length of service with the current employers and hourly wages of employees were studied. This revealed that people who received nothing were more likely to have been working less than 6 months. However, it was still the case that 16 out of 48 had been working for more than 5 years with their current employers, but

were still receiving no payment. Out of the people who received more than the minimum wage, the percentage of people who had been working with their current employers for more than 7 years was greater than the percentage of people who had been working with their current employers for less than 7 years. Length of service does therefore tend to lead to increased pay.

It has already been noted in Chapter Three that providing work experience is very helpful to get a successful job and the majority of people with learning difficulties who had no work experience were unable to find jobs and those who had participated in work experience at either school or college had managed to find jobs. This study showed that the hourly wages of people who had been working for their current employers for longer was higher than for others. Therefore, the current study supports the findings of other research which showed that providing work experience was important in gaining paid employment. In this regard, it is the responsibility of school, college and supported employment agencies to provide suitable work experience for people with learning difficulties.

Weekly working hours: Weekly hours were categorised on the basis of a notional 8 hour working day with those working under 16 hours being placed in a single category. Other categories were for 3, 4 and 5 days employment (see Table 7.6).

Table 7.6: Weekly working hours of 200 employees with learning difficulties

Weekly working Hours	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than 16 Hours	68	34.0
16-23 Hours	31	15.5
24-31 Hours	15	7.5
32-39 Hours	86	43.0
Total	200	100.0

Therefore, most employees with learning difficulties worked more than 16 hours or two working days. The results of the current study do not agree with the findings of the Beyer et al (2004) study which showed most employers worked less than 16 hours. This may be because most employees with learning difficulties in the Beyer et al (2004) study were on the social security benefit and if they wanted to work more than five hours, they would lose some part of their benefits. However, regarding types of work and weekly working hours, this study indicated that among the people who worked between 32 and 39 hours per week, the percentage of adults with paid employment

(66.3%) was greater than the percentage of employees who were unpaid. It is worth noting that out of the people who worked less than 16 hours (34% of 200 employees), the percentage of employees who were unpaid (46.2%) was greater than employees (21.4%) who had paid employment (see Table 7.7).

Table 7.7: Weekly working hours and Type of work

Weekly working hours	Type of Work		Total %
	Paid (%)	Unpaid (%)	
Less than 16 Hours N=68	30.9 (21.4)	69.1 (46.1)	100.0 (34.0)
16-23 Hours N=31	16.1 (5.1)	83.9 (25.5)	100.0 (15.5)
24-31 Hours N=15	46.7 (7.1)	53.3 (7.8)	100.0 (7.5)
32-39 Hours N=86	75.6 (66.3)	24.4 (20.6)	100.0 (43.0)
Total N=200	49.0 100.0	51.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

It is worth noting that 92% of workers from the MAP Workstep programme worked between 32 and 39 hours and all of them were paid. Again, this programme seems to have produced better outcomes for the participants compared with others. Without knowing more about the sample than the databases used will allow it remains very difficult to explain why this should be the case.

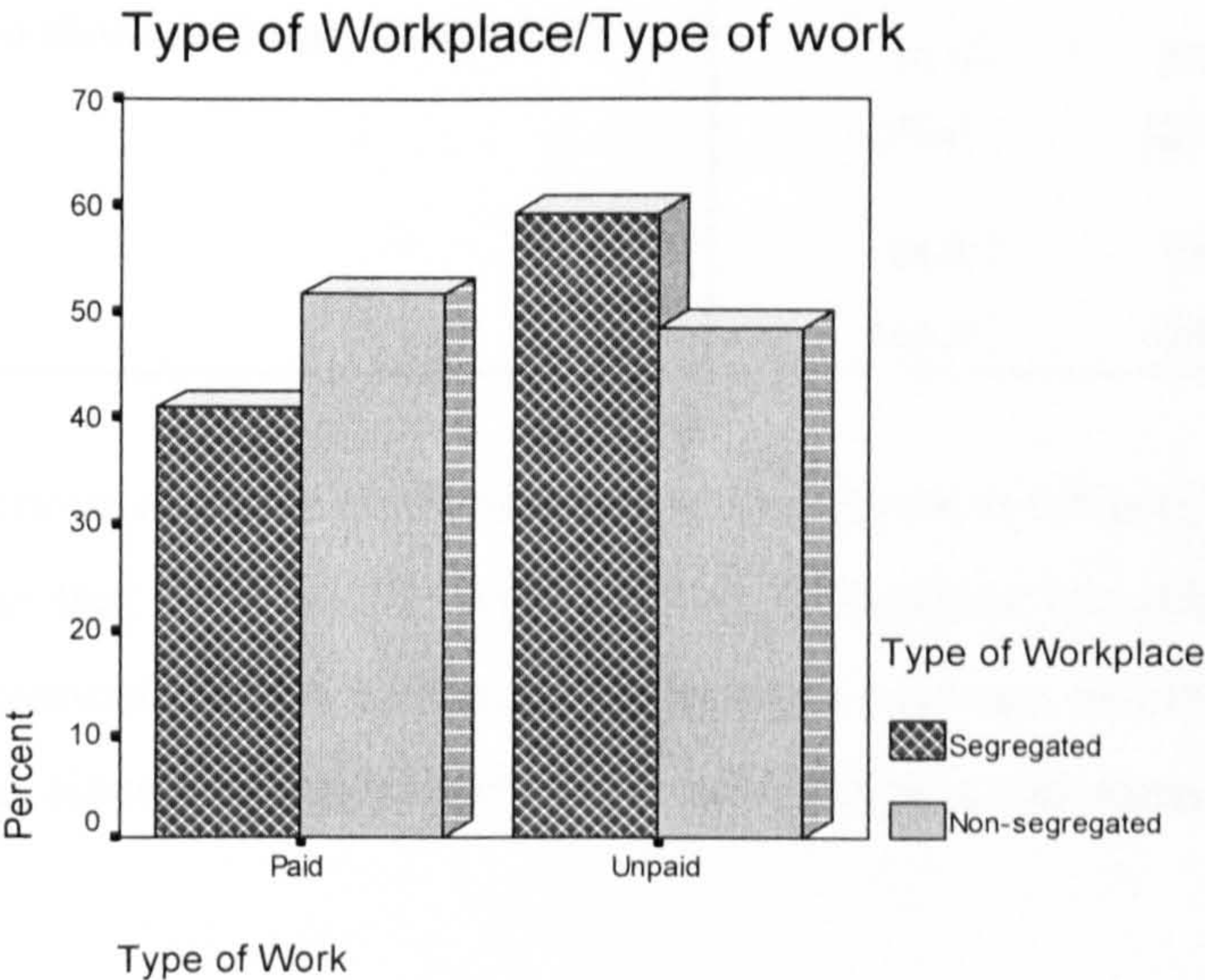
Segregated or non-segregated workplaces: Most (75.5%) of the 200 informants worked in non-segregated placements. All of the employees who were from the MAP workstep programme worked in non-segregated workplaces. This study also shows some differences between employees who were employed in segregated and in non-segregated placements regarding weekly hours, type of work and hourly wages. For example, regarding weekly hours and type of workplaces, this study indicates that in all four groups (less than 16 hours, 16-23 hours, 24-31 hours, and 32-39 hours), the percentage of people who worked in non-segregated workplaces was much greater than that of those who worked in segregated placements (see Table 7.8).

Table 7.8: Weekly working hours and Type of Workplace

Weekly working hours	Type of Workplace		Total %
	Segregated (%)	Non-segregated (%)	
Less than 16 Hours N=68	13.2 (18.4)	86.8 (39.1)	100.0 (34.0)
16-23 Hours N=31	29.0 (18.4)	71.0 (14.6)	100.0 (15.5)
24-31 Hours N=15	13.3 (4.1)	86.7 (8.6)	100.0 (7.5)
32-39 Hours N=86	33.7 (59.2)	66.3 (37.7)	100.0 (43.0)
Total N=200	24.5% 100.0%	75.5 100.0	100.0 100.0

In relation to the types of work and workplaces, out of the people who worked in segregated placements, most were unpaid and among the employees who worked in non-segregated placements, most had paid employment. Out of the people who had paid employment, a majority worked in non-segregated workplaces (see Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1



Regarding hourly wages and types of workplaces, out of the people who worked in segregated placements, most (59%) received nothing. Out of the employees who received more than the minimum wage, the percentage of employees who worked in non-segregated placements (46%) was greater than the percentage of people who worked in segregated placements (37%). Among the people who received less than the minimum wage, the percentage of people who worked in segregated placements (63%) was greater than the percentage who worked in non-segregated placements (5.36%). Therefore, the study shows that most people who worked in non-segregated placements had paid employment and their hourly wages were much better and higher than people who worked in segregated placements. Most people who worked in segregated workplaces were marginalised from having paid employment with good wages (see Table 7.9).

Table 7.9: Wage per Hour and Type of Workplace

	Type of Workplace		
Hourly wage	Segregated (%)	Non-segregated (%)	Total %
Nothing N=100	29.0 (59.2)	71.0 (47.0)	100.0 (50.0)
Less than Minimum Wage (Less than £4.25) N=12	16.7 (4.1)	83.3 (6.6)	100.0 (6.0)
Minimum Wage (£4.25) N=34	23.5 (16.3)	76.5 (17.2)	100.0 (17.0)
More than Minimum Wage (£4.30-£5.50) N=54	18.5 (20.4)	81.5 (29.1)	100.0 (27.0)
Total N=200	24.5 100.0	75.5 100.0	100.0 100.0

By exploring the above negative characteristics of employment for people with learning difficulties, I argue that most people with learning difficulties are still excluded from mainstream employment. Below I consider differences between women and men with learning difficulties since data analysis showed real differences between the two.

Prior to doing this it is worth noting once again that the MAP Workstep programme seemed systematically to be producing better outcomes than other programmes: being paid over the minimum wage; working full time; maintaining a longer employment; and working full time. Without more research it is difficult to know why this should be the case but it would certainly be good to be seeking to emulate these successes with all people with learning difficulties. More is said about this in later chapters.

Women with learning difficulties and work

Over history the employment role of women with learning difficulties has shown assumptions around the division of labour between men and women. Literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries points to women doing laundry work (Stuart, 2002; Lewenhak, 1988; Martha, 1992; Mary, 1993; Maria, 1992; Walmsley, 1995) with no wages. Laundry work was seen as women's work (Lewenhak cited in Stuart, 2002: 75), and the women worked in 'harsh, long hours in damp and humid conditions' (Stuart, 2002: 75) in the convent homes. Hence:

I started in the ironing room, I really hated it, I burnt all the hankies so they moved me. I won't exactly say I did it deliberately, no, well yes, that was the intention and I was glad to move on. They sent me to the drying room but the machine hurt my arms so I played up a bit and I ended up in packing and sorting. I liked packing; it was warm in there but the sorting was cold. I always had bronchitis in the winter (Maria quoted in Stuart, 2002: 75).

Stuart (2002) argues that laundry work was a central feature of 'colonies and hospitals where women inmates were usually employed' (p. 77). She also notes that in all women's environment, laundries had a particular meaning to remind the women of their sins as well as for the institution cutting the costs of running the establishment.

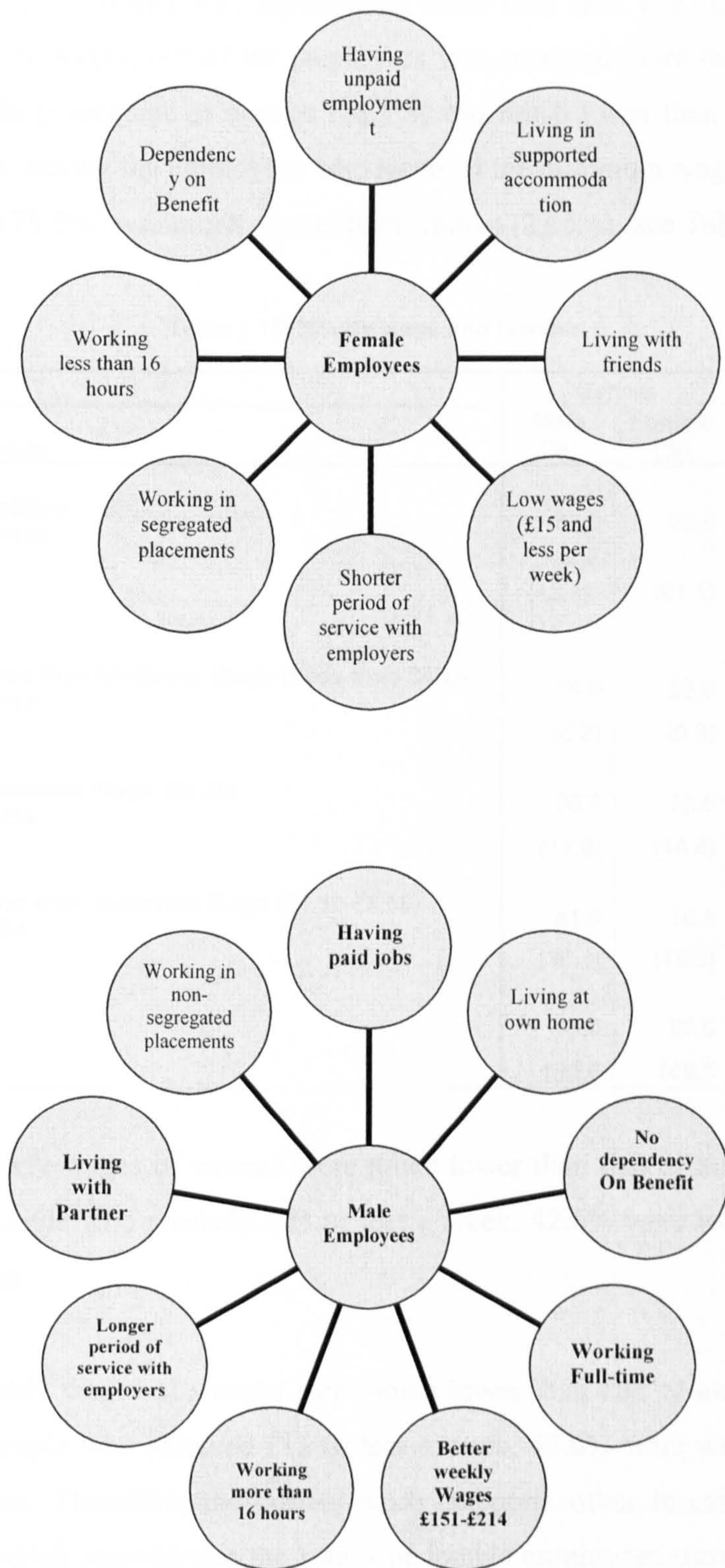
The literature also reported some developments in women's work in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century's from doing laundry work to doing sewing work (Walmsley, 1995) and factory work (Stuart, 2002; Chew, 1982; Philips, 1994) with hard conditions. Hence:

A standard working day was from 8am-6pm with an hour for lunch and from 8am till 12 on Saturdays. During overtime, they worked to seven or eight at night (Phillips quoted in Stuart, 2002: 76).

However, Stuart (2002) argues that social attitudes to people with learning difficulties changed as did the acceptability of institutionalised living. The development of the educational and employment policies in the twentieth century shifted the value-base towards meaningful employment in the labour market and to paid and unpaid work opportunities in the 'real' world of work (Stuart, 2002). Significantly, if, based on the recent policies (DDA, 1995; DRC, 2004; PMSU, 2005), all disabled people have the same right to employment as other citizens, what is the contemporary nature of work for the women with learning difficulties?

This study shows that despite emphasising employment for all disabled people, the employment circumstances of women with learning difficulties are very poor and their exclusion from employment is greater than that of men. For example, the findings from 200 employees with learning difficulties revealed many differences between male and female employees (see Figure 7.2).

**Figure 7.2: Employment characteristics of females and males employees
with learning difficulties**



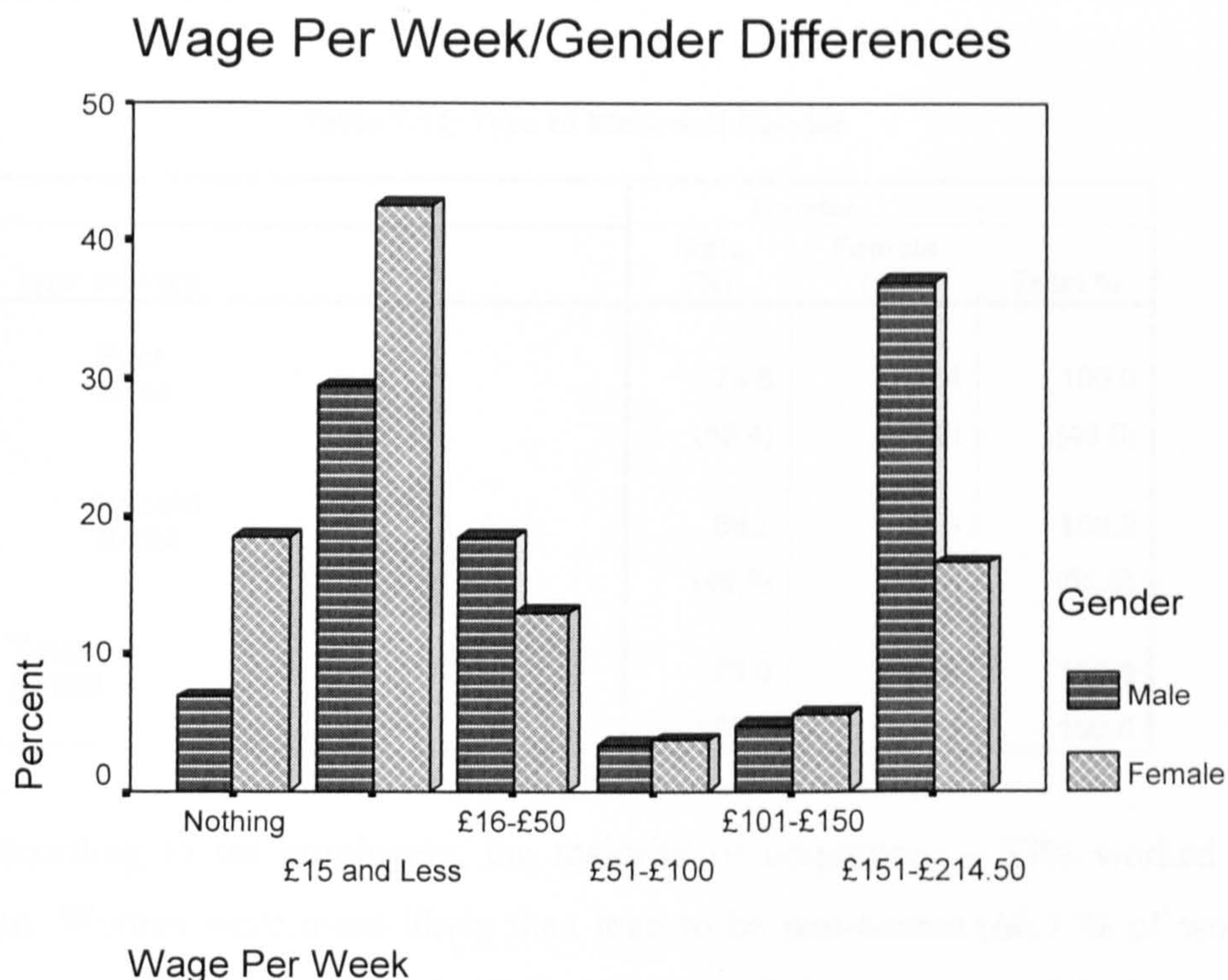
- Out of 200 employees who worked in several workplaces, 54 adults were women and 146 were men.
- The wages of women was significantly lower than men. For example, regarding the hourly wages, out of the employees who received more than the minimum wage, the percentage of women (18.5%) was much lower than men (81.5%). In addition, among the employees who received the minimum wage, the percentage of men (76.5%) was much greater than women (23.5%) (see Table 7.10)

Table 7.10: Hourly wage and Gender

Hourly wage	Gender		Total %
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Nothing N=100	67.0 (45.9)	33.0 (61.1)	100.0 (50.0)
Less than Minimum Wage (Less than £4.25) N=12	75.0 (6.2)	25.0 (5.6)	100.0 (6.0)
Minimum Wage (£4.25) N=34	76.5 (17.8)	23.5 (14.8)	100.0 (17.0)
More than Minimum Wage (£4.30-£5.50) N=54	81.5 (30.1)	18.5 (18.5)	100.0 (27.0)
Total N=200	73.0 100.0	27.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

- The weekly wages of women were much lower than that of men. For example, of the people who received £15 or less a week, 42.6% were women and 29.5% were men.
- The weekly wages of women were much lower than that of men. For example, of the people who received £15 or less a week, 42.6% were women and 29.5% were men. Therefore, the current study supports other research (see Chapter Three) which showed that the wages of female employees were lower than that of males (see Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3



- Men occupied a wider variety of jobs than did women. Out of 39 job titles, 21 job titles occupied only by men including bar assistant, hairdressing assistant, driver assistant, befriended person, refuse operative, packaging assistant, machinist, production worker, porter, equipment maintenance assistant, chef, urban ranger, box maker, car valet assistant, patient assistant, trolley collector, library assistant, counter assistant, lorry crew, customer service worker, and tyre fitter. Out of 39 job titles, two job titles occupied only by women including: administrator and theatre assistant. Moreover, there were some jobs where men were in the majority including: cleaner and gardener; recycling assistant; clerical assistant and labourer; factory operative and warehouse assistant. Furthermore there were some jobs where women were in the majority including: kitchen assistant; shop assistant; car assistant; theatre assistant; waitress; domestic assistant; and internal post worker. Therefore, this study supports Lonsdale (1990) study which showed that most females were employed in low skilled positions.

- Most women were unpaid, and were doing work experience or voluntary work (see Table 7.11).

Table 7.11: Type of Work and Gender

Type of Work	Gender		Total %
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Paid N=98	79.6 (53.4)	20.4 (37.0)	100.0 (49.0)
Unpaid N=102	66.7 (46.6)	33.3 (63.0)	100.0 (51.0)
Total N=200	73.0 100.0	27.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

- According to the employers, the majority of employees – 53% worked part time. Women were more likely than men to be part-timers (66.7 % of women compared to 48.6% of men). Eighty percent of the men were full timers (see Table 7.12).

Table 7.12: Full/part-time division according to the employers and Gender

Full/part-time division according to the employers	Gender		Total %
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Part-time N=107	66.4 (48.6)	33.6 (66.7)	100.0 (53.5)
Full-time N=93	80.6 (51.4)	19.4 (33.3)	100.0 (46.5)
Total N=200	73.0 100.0	27.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

- Based on the Jobcentre definition, most employees (64.5%) were full-time, and of the people who were full-time, the percentage of men (67.8%) was greater than the percentage of women (55.6%) (See Table 7.13).

Table 7.13: Full/part-time division based on Jobcentre definition and Gender

Full/part-time division based on Jobcentre definition	Gender		Total %
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Part-time N=71	66.2 (32.2)	33.8 (44.4)	100.0 (35.5)
Full-time N=129	76.7 (67.8)	23.3 (55.6)	100.0 (64.5)
Total N=200	73.0 100.0	27.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

- The number of hours that women worked per week was lower than the number that men work. For example, out of the people who worked less than 16 hours, the percentage of females (44.4%) was greater than the percentage of men (30.1%). In addition, of the people who worked between 16 and 23 hours, the percentage of women (20.4%) was greater than the percentage of men (13.7%). Moreover, out of the people who worked between 24 and 31 hours, there was no difference between men and women. Furthermore, of the people who worked between 32 and 39 hours, the percentage of men (48.6%) was much greater than the percentage of women (27.8%). Therefore, this study showed that most women worked fewer weekly hours than men (see Table 7.14).

Table 7.14: Weekly working hours and Gender

Weekly Working Hours	Gender		Total %
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Less than 16 Hours N=68	64.7 (30.1)	35.3 (44.4)	100.0 (34.0)
16-23 Hours N=31	64.5 (13.7)	35.5 (20.4)	100.0 (15.5)
24-31 Hours N=15	73.3 (7.5)	26.7 (7.4)	100.0 (7.5)
32-39 Hours N=86	82.6 (48.6)	17.4 (27.8)	100.0 (43.0)
Total N=200	73.0 100.0	27.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

- Regarding the length of service with the current employers, the period of service of women with their current employers was lower than men. For example, out of the people who worked less than 6 months, the percentage of women (20.4%) was greater than the percentage of men (13.7%). However, out of the employees who had been employed for 84 months (7 years), the percentage of women (5.6%) was lower than the percentage of men (12.3%). Therefore, this study showed that women had less experience with their current employers than men (see Table 7.15).

Table 7.15: Time with current employer (in month) and Gender

Time with current employer (in month)	Gender		Total %
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Less than 6 Months N=31	64.5 (13.7)	35.5 (20.4)	100.0 (15.5)
6-12 Months N=37	70.3 (17.8)	29.7 (20.4)	100.0 (18.5)
13-36 Months N=59	72.9 (29.5)	27.1 (29.6)	100.0 (29.5)
37-60 Months N=25	80.0 (13.7)	20.0 (9.3)	100.0 (12.5)
61-84 Months N=27	70.4 (13.0)	29.6 (14.8)	100.0 (13.5)
More than 84 Months N=21	85.7 (12.3)	14.3 (5.6)	100.0 (10.5)
Total N=200	73.0 100.0	27.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

- Most women worked in non-segregated workplaces, but their employment circumstances were not better than that of men because most of women had unpaid employment in non-segregated placements (see Table 7.16).

Table 7.16: Type of Workplace and Gender

Type of Workplace	Gender		Total %
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Segregated N=49	91.8 (30.8)	8.2 (7.4)	100.0 (24.5)
Non-segregated N=151	66.9 (69.2)	33.1 (92.6)	100.0 (75.5)
Total N=200	73.0 100.0	27.0 100.0	100.0 100.0

There was a greater dependency on social security benefit for women than there was for men. Most women who received benefit lived in supported accommodation and most of the supported accommodation was run by the Social Service. Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Heenan (2002) study which showed that social security benefits were important sources of income for disabled people in the UK. Secondly, most women lived with their friends rather than alone or with their parents or siblings.

In this analysis women with learning difficulties have been shown to be disadvantaged compared to men with learning difficulties in terms of their work opportunities. Overall, this study emphasised that the employment circumstances of employees, particularly women were very poor thus supporting the findings of other research. The findings give a strong message that people with learning difficulties, particularly women are not accorded the full range of rights that other citizens are. Historically women are disadvantaged as they were in the nineteenth century laundries. Why? Is it because of their individual impairment or is it related to other factors? More research needs to be undertaken in this area.

The above analysis of 200 case files has provided some broad scale data indicating the nature of the overall work experience of people with learning difficulties. It has shown that the employment circumstances of women with learning difficulties were very poor and their exclusion from employment was greater than those men. Therefore, the current study supports the findings of other research which showed that among people with

learning difficulties, women are less likely to be employed and their level of wages are lower.

Below the views of people with learning difficulties and their parents are used to flesh out the broad level picture that has so far been produced out of the analysis..

Employment barriers: the views of people with learning difficulties and their parents

Finlay and Lyons (1998) argued that self-descriptions of people with learning difficulties focused 'On not being able to do things' (p. 41). The stories showed that in general, the self-perceptions of the six informants focused on 'being able' to do many things as well as non-disabled people. All the six informants had very positive perceptions of themselves and they stated that they could do jobs as well as their non-disabled colleagues. For example, Roy stated:

There is no difference; I work as hard as everybody else. I have enough experience in a green grocery shop and I can work in many placements like that.

Therefore, the stories do not agree with the Finlay and Lyons (1998) study which showed that people with learning difficulties had negative self-perceptions. The self-perceptions of people with learning difficulties were positive and strongly affected their lives. For example, Robert Savage became independent in many aspects of his life as a result of his positive perceptions about himself. Sheila Davies had a positive self-perception and she had a role of carer for her elderly mother and disabled sister. However, why is it that despite positive self-perceptions, the informants are excluded from paid employment and they could not get paid jobs after doing many years voluntary work? It has already been noted in Chapter Three that there are structural and individual barriers to employing people with learning difficulties. The stories revealed four important employment barriers for them: the negative attitudes of employers towards informants, loss of state benefit, low parental expectations and lack of qualifications.

Employers' negative attitudes: All the six informants believed that the negative attitude of employers towards people with learning difficulties was one of the barriers which prevented them from obtaining paid work. For example, Robert Savage stated:

People with learning disabilities prefer to have paid jobs rather than doing voluntary work...Most people with learning disabilities don't get paid. I think some employers don't like to employ us because we have learning disabilities.

Why do employers not like to employ people with learning difficulties? The stories highlighted employers' lack of awareness about the ability of people with learning difficulties. For example, Lisa Watkins said:

I cannot get paid job. Because, most employers do not like to give us a proper job. They do not understand us. They think we cannot work very well. But we do, we do work the same as everybody.

Therefore, the stories support the findings of the Kitchen et al (1998), and Craig and Body (1990) studies which highlighted that employers do not employ people with learning difficulties because they do not see their abilities and employers are concerned about the people with learning difficulties' 'competency and dependability' (Craig & Body, 1990: 41).

Losing benefit: The stories highlighted that despite working in several placements, all the six informants still received benefit. This was, because their wages were very low and the informants were afraid of losing their benefits.

My wage is £3 a day and I get £12 a week. I cannot earn more because I receive DLA. If I get more wages, I lose my benefit.

(Sheila Davies)

How much benefit do they receive each week? Oliver (1996: 64) argues that the present disability benefit system 'does not even cover impairment related costs and effectively discourages many of those who struggle for autonomy and financial independence.' Similarly, Souza (cited in Barton, 2000: 39) notes, 'the level of their state benefits are often adequate only for basic needs.' The stories highlighted that the level of the benefit for workers who lived in the parental home was low. For example, Lisa Watkins stated:

I get DLA and JSA as well. For JSA I have to go to the Jobcentre every two weeks to sign the paper. My benefits aren't too much. In total, I get £68 a week.

The stories showed that the benefit system made it difficult for people with learning difficulties to do paid work. Therefore, the results of this study support the findings of the Beyer et al (2004), and Roulstone et al (2003) studies which highlighted that the benefit system did not let people with learning difficulties earn more than £20 per week.

Low parental expectations: Low parental expectations of their disabled children affected the employment of the informants. Out of the six informants, three were raised by both their parents; two by single parents; and one lived in homecare after a few years living with her parents in early childhood. In addition, two informants were still living with their parents; two were living with their mothers at their families' home, and two were living in homecare during the period of the study.

The stories showed that most parents²¹ had low expectations of their children because of their learning difficulties. Most parents perceived that their children would not be able to get paid jobs. For example, when Lisa Watkins' father was asked, 'Why has Lisa got a paid job after many years doing voluntary work?' he stated:

Lisa could not compete in a normal job situation and she needed help such as supervision—she needs some help, and assistance at her workplace—Lisa is not capable of working as effectively as a non-disabled person—she is not productive as person who has not got learning difficulties.

The perception of Lisa's father of his daughter as 'incapable' was because he perceived his daughter as a person who was 'intellectually impaired'. He stated that 'Lisa is 24 years old but has learning disabilities and is intellectually impaired so she is intellectually about 14 years old'.

Lack of qualifications and adequate education The stories highlighted a lack of qualifications and adequate education as another employment barrier. Hence

Sometimes when customers come to the café they ask for tea, biscuits ... and give me paper money £5 or £10. So I get confused with their change. I never learned about money at school. I did some training with some paper money a long time ago. So I ask the staff to help me with the change.

(Sheila Davies)

²¹ Except for Julia Martin and Sheila Davies' families, there it was impossible to meet their parents because of the reason of confidentiality.

In this regard, Sheila's support worker mentioned that if Sheila wanted to get paid employment, she would need a lot of support to do the job. Does this lack of qualifications stem from 'individual impairment' or from a lack of suitable education? Sheila stated that she had never learned about money at school. One of the British Government's aims (DoH, 2001: 35) for people with learning difficulties is to 'strengthen the right of children with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools'. Barnes (cited in Rieser and Mason, 1992: 1) notes that 'disabled children should be educated alongside their non-disabled peers'. But he (1996: 64) argues, 'the majority of the British schools, colleges and universities remain unprepared to accommodate disabled students within a mainstream setting' (see PMSU, 2005). The stories showed that most informants had experienced exclusion in education, whether mainstream or special education. Out of the six informants, only Robert Savage had completed his education in mainstream school. The other five informants were excluded from mainstream education. Three of them had started their education in mainstream school, but later moved to a special school because, as they stated it was not felt that there was adequate support in the mainstream schools. For example, Lisa Watkins stated:

My parents took me to Laurel Mainstream School, but the teachers couldn't give me support. Then they referred me to a special school where I learned reading, writing and there were some disabled children. So, my parents took me to the mainstream again because there was a special class for children with learning problems. I couldn't get extra lessons and support because that special class closed later...I came back to the special school again...My parents took me to a mainstream senior school where there was a special class for people with learning problems in Maths, English, and Science, but later, that class was closed and I had no support from teachers...I went to Dutchwood Special Secondary School where I did many courses like Cookery.

Four of the informants had experienced mainstream school for at least a few months. However, as a result of a lack of adequate support in mainstream schools, they faced some difficulties. They did not understand the lessons and that affected their self-esteem and self-confidence. For example, Lisa Watkins stated, 'At mainstream, I couldn't understand the lessons; I had no support from the teacher.' Therefore, the stories support the Barnes and Mercer (2003: 44) study which showed that the mainstream schools failed to satisfy disabled children's education, support and social needs. If the mainstream schools failed to satisfy disabled children's educational needs, how does

special education consider the needs of those with learning difficulties, particularly in entering and maintaining paid employment?

French and Swain (2000: 20) argue that ‘many disabled people have received an inadequate education within special schools and that many special schools placed a lot of emphasis on practical tasks like cleaning and gardening’. Such an education can lead to difficulties in later life. For example, Sheila Davies who had attended a special school stated that she did not learn about money at school. Some researchers highlight that ‘special education’ has failed to provide adequate support and appropriate education for disabled people to enable them to enter into the labour market (Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Roulstone, 1998). Oliver (1996: 92) argues that special education has failed in ‘giving disabled people the skills and values to compete in the labour market with everyone else’, and, indeed the stories showed that the informants had been excluded from ‘proper jobs’ in mainstream employment. In addition, some evidence indicates that people with learning difficulties leaving school are unable to get open employment (Thompson et al, 1995; May and Hughes, 1985).

The experiences of the six informants in higher education also showed more exclusion in education. All informants had some experience of colleges and day centres, but the level of their educational standard was low, because firstly, some of the courses they had taken were not related to their current jobs. Sheila Davies for example, did a woodwork course, but her job was kitchen assistant in a café. Secondly, the courses were not related to their interests. Robert Savage for example, did gardening and horticulture for nearly three years at college, but he did not enjoy it.

I did NVQ Level One and Two in horticulture and gardening...I enjoyed working with animals, but I didn't want to do that job permanently because I didn't like it.

(Robert Savage)

The 2001 White Paper, Valuing People (2001: 78) stated that ‘Young people with learning disabilities should not be sent to further education colleges because there is a lack of suitable provision either in updated training facilities or in supported employment service’. This is a very interesting statement. If there is a lack of suitable provision for people with learning difficulties in college, what is the solution?

The above statement from *the 2001 White Paper, Valuing People* showed that most policy makers and service providers believe that people with learning difficulties still

need to be segregated from mainstream education as the result of their impairments. However, the experiences of the six informants showed that their problems at school were not because of their individual impairment. The problem stemmed from structural barriers like a lack of support and adequate provision at school which denied them or marginalised them in mainstream education.

Overall, the stories showed that the informants had experienced exclusion even in special education. The stories support the findings of the Oliver (1996) and Barnes and Mercer (2003) studies which noted that the special educational system did not give people with learning difficulties enough skills to compete with non-disabled workers in the labour market and failed to provide disabled children with the knowledge and skills to take their rightful place in the community. If the British Government's commitment is to provide excellent education for all children whether disabled or non-disabled (DfES, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2005; DoH, 2001: 35), why are people with learning difficulties still segregated and excluded from mainstream education in the 21st century? Goodley and Norouzi (2005) asked: Why are the rights of people who have been marginalised from mainstream education still denied? The reasons need to be investigated further.

Social exclusion

People with learning difficulties are often socially excluded (Emerson et al, 2005). It has already been noted in Chapter Three that work provides money, facilitates social inclusion and makes a contribution to other people. Having adequate income is a key element of participation: for the goods and services it can purchase, and for its role in facilitating better health and educational achievement, and greater opportunities for social and political participation (Burchardt, 2000: 1). Despite the importance of income for disabled people (Roulstone, 2003), the stories showed that most informants who were employed received the minimum wage or less (Beyer, et al, 1999, 2003, 2004; Bass & Drewett, 1996; Secker et al, 2003). Therefore, the exclusion of the informants from mainstream employment affected their social lives, since, as Carr (2004) argues 'People's ability to enjoy leisure is closely related to their employment status...people excluded from workplace, including...disabled people, often find it difficult to organise their leisure time' (p. 183). Hence

Inclusion means enabling people with learning disabilities to do those ordinary things, make use of mainstream services and be fully included in the local community.

(DoH, 2001: 24)

Their exclusion from mainstream society also means that ‘they participate less in public life and institutions. This means fewer voices are being expressed and taken into account in the democratic process and in the creation of the values and norms that shape society’ (PMSU, 2005: 50). Are people with learning difficulties included in the community in the same way as other citizens? The stories showed that the six informants experienced exclusion from social life and they were excluded from the local community. In this section, I will explore two examples of social exclusion: exclusion from friendships and exclusion from mainstream leisure. Membership in self-advocacy group will be introduced as method of social inclusion for them.

Exclusion from friendship in the community: Having friendships and social relationships are important benefits of inclusion in society. The stories highlighted that the six informants had different experiences of friendship with others in their families, their workmates, their neighbours and their peers in childhood and adulthood. These differences between the informants who lived in homecare and people who lived with their families in the parental homes were significant. For example, regarding close friendships, the stories showed that all informants living in the parental home had very close relationships with their relatives. For instance, Lisa Watkins had a very close relationship with her parents, and grandmother. However, two informants living in homecare had very close relationships with one or two residents who lived with them in the same home. For example, Sally James lived with five residents, but had made a very close relationship with Janet, who was one of the residents who lived with Sally. Sally stated:

At Silkwood House I live with Janet who is my best friend in my life. I know Janet from school...Janet’s room is very close to my room. Most of the time, Janet and I go to town to look in the stationary shop and buy pens, bags, or books and we go back to Silkwood House. We spend a lot of time together.

Over two out of three people with learning difficulties (69%) had contact with friends at least once a year (Emerson et al, 2005). Regarding social contact with others, out of

the four informants who had been living in their parental homes, only Robert Savage has had much social contact with other people in different social settings. The other informants, particularly the girls, had very limited social relationships with others, because their parents were protective and prevented them from going out with friends. This was, perhaps, because their parents were worried about and afraid of sexual abuse. Ramcharan et al (1997: 53) noted that the empowerment of people with learning difficulties living in their parental home was very low, not because of their inability to make friends, but because they were protected by their parents. Similarly, Richardson and Ritchie (1989: 15) argue that people with learning difficulties living in the parental home often had limited social contact with others because their parents were very protective.

The two informants who lived in homecare had limited social contact with non-residents because their carers and the key workers were protective. So, they always spent their time in homecare. When they went out, they went with other residents who lived with them. For example, Julia Martin stated:

We (Julia and Carol) go out for a drink. I go swimming once a week and go to The Gateway Club where I meet my friends, and dancing with Carol and Judy, who is a nice girl and lives in the same place as me.

In addition, the informants who lived in homecare had very limited individual social activities and always had social activities with the group. For example, Sally James stated:

We (with group) go out to the theatre, cinema, and pub for a drink or a meal and go on visits to the countryside, seaside for holidays. This year we went on holiday to a place in Nottinghamshire where we were in a nice hotel for about one week, and we enjoyed that.

The stories support the findings of Fleming and Kroese (1990: 455) which stated that individual choice was limited and social activities outside the house occurred usually in a group for people who lived in homecare.

People with learning difficulties living in residential homes lacked the opportunity to go out in the evening because of staff shortages (Walker, 1995; Fleming & Kroese, 1990). So, in Sally's case, if she and her friends wanted to go out to different places at the same time, they would not be able to because they would not be allowed to go out alone in the evening. They would need a member of staff to be with them.

The social settings where informants had made social relationships with their friends were limited. Out of the four informants who had been living in their parental home,

only Robert Savage had made social contacts with his friends in several settings, and the other informants, particularly those who lived in homecare only met some people in two or three settings, especially at their workplaces. Ramcharan et al (1997) and Chappell (1994) argued that social relationships between people with learning difficulties and non-disabled people are of greater value than those friendships between disabled people. *Did informants have friendships with non-disabled people?* Out of the four informants who had been living in their parental home, only two had had friendships with a few non-disabled friends. The other informants had made more social relationships with friends with learning difficulties. The friendships of the two informants who had been living in homecare were with people with learning difficulties living in the same place. As Firth and Rapley (1990: 20) note, 'they live in segregated settings'. The stories showed that the informants had limited friendships and social relationship with their non-disabled colleagues in their workplaces. All informants stated that employment would support them in making friends, in having social relationships with colleagues in the workplace, in earning money and in not being dependent on benefit. However, the stories indicated that most informants were excluded from paid employment and were on benefit. Therefore, as the result of their low income, most informants had difficulty to practice social niceties, such as buying drinks in a pub (Atkinson & Ward, 1986), and using transport (Richardson & Ritchie, 1989).

Some researchers argue that the workplace is one of the important settings where people with learning difficulties make friends with their workmates and others (Firth & Rapley, 1990; Zetlin & Michael, 1988; Burchardt, 2000). The majority of respondents with learning difficulties in Schneider and Wistow (2004: 25) said that they got on well with people at work. 'Colleagues were often described as friendly and helpful'. The stories showed that all the informants had a few friendships with workmates but that these were limited to the workplace, and only during working hours, particularly at break time. Robert Savage, for example, stated:

At Oxfam, apart from me, five people with learning disabilities do voluntary work...at break time, we drink coffee and tea with colleagues downstairs. I like talking to people

Regarding close friends at work Schneider and Wistow (2004: 26) reported that 40% of employees with learning difficulties did not have close friends at work. In addition, the Shneider and Wistow study (2004) indicated that a few people with learning difficulties were socialising with their colleagues outside of work. In this regard, the stories showed

that out of the five informants who had worked in several placements, only Lisa Watkins had social contact with one of her workmates outside of work and this was only for an hour per week.

I go swimming with my friend who is from work and has got a little boy. I go and enjoy spending an hour with her at the swimming pool every Monday...I only have contact with my friend from work.

(Lisa Watkins)

Most informants worked in non-segregated placements where they had opportunities to meet non-disabled colleagues. However, most informants who worked in mainstream placements were socially isolated and did not have relationships with non-disabled colleagues. Their social relationships tended to be with colleagues with learning difficulties rather than with non-disabled workmates. This was, perhaps, because as Szivos (1992: 122) argues, 'people with learning disabilities have much to gain from each others' company'. Also, they lack confidence (Firth and Rapley, 1990; Emerson et al, 2005) and they may have been bullied by non-disabled people in the community (Norwich and Kelly, 2004), and at school (Emerson et al, 2005).

How did they get on with neighbours? Richardson and Ritchie (1989) argued that in their study people with learning difficulties had no social acceptance from neighbours. This was because of a lack of confidence and past experiences of rejection by neighbours (Firth & Rapley, 1990: 20). They were bullied by neighbours and peers (Norwich & Kelly, 2004: 60). The stories showed that all informants, whether living in the parental home or in homecare, wished to have a relationship with their neighbours but did not because they have had bad experiences in the past and also most of them had been bullied by neighbours. For example, Roy Watson stated:

I like playing football but I don't have any friends to play with...There is a guy in front. He plays football, but I don't like to play with him because he treats me like a child. So I don't feel happy with him and prefer to stay at home.

I asked all the six informants to talk about the bad experiences in their lives, and most informants mentioned, 'bullying by people.' Informants, who lived in homecare, had no contact with their neighbours at all. But the informants who lived in the parental home had been bullied by neighbours. Therefore, the stories support the findings of other research which noted that people with learning difficulties had limited social relationships and friendships in society. *Why do people with learning difficulties have limited friendships with others?* The stories showed that there was nothing wrong with

the ability of the informants to form friendships. For example, I spent a lot of time with Robert Savage, Julia Martin and Sheila Davies in different settings like The Gateway Club, their workplaces, at the theatre, in the city centre and at the self-advocacy group. I also had two trips with Robert Savage, one to Manchester to attend an exhibition for people with learning difficulties and another to the Open University to attend the Social History of Learning Disability Conference. As a result of being with my participants in many settings, I realised that all of them had enough social skills to have friendships with people but with the exception of Robert Savage, the other five informants were prevented by their parents and carers from having social relationships with others. Some informants were interested in joining some clubs, but their parents prevented them from doing so. For example, Roy Watson's mother was not happy to let Roy go to the Gateway Club because she believed that attendance could affect her son adversely:

Well Roy doesn't go places to meet anyone you know. There aren't many clubs for people like Roy. I know there is The Gateway Club but a lot of people are a lot worse than Roy and I find that if he mixes with those who are a lot worse he tends to go down instead of up. The more normal he mixes with the better he is.

Exclusion in mainstream leisure: Leisure is a very important aspect of people's lives in the community. Carr (2004: 183) defines leisure as 'free time...the amount of time we have available outside of work or paid employment'. Increasing self-esteem, confidence, social relationships, friendships, emotional and psychological well-being and physical health are benefits of leisure (Murray, 2002; Fullagar & Owler, 1998; Aitchison, 2003; and Carr, 2004). The stories showed that the informants were all excluded from mainstream leisure activities. Among them, the informants engaged in 80 different leisure activities. 37 of these activities were pursued at home by the informants and 63 were out of the parental home or homecare.

All the six informants, at home, watched TV; helped parents or the staff, and listened to music. Writing, colouring and reading books were done by three informants; playing games on computer by two people; and other activities were done by one informant. Therefore, the stories support the findings of other research (Richardson et al, 1993: 433) that most people with learning difficulties spent their leisure time alone, and that their social interaction was very low. In addition, the stories showed that out of the leisure activities which the six informants pursued in the community, shopping, travelling and going on holiday were done by all the six informants; physical activities by five informants; going to the local pub by four informants. Going to the Gateway

Club, non-competitive sports, going to the stadium to watch football matches, and going to the cinema were done by three of the informants; and, the other activities were done by two or one informant. Therefore, the stories support the findings of the Ager et al (2001) study that people with learning difficulties frequently went shopping or to a café or pub. It is worth noting that out of the six informants Robert Savage had engaged with 23 leisure activities out of the 80 leisure activities. This was, perhaps, because as Ager et al (2001) argued, doing leisure activities for people with learning difficulties require a high degree of personal autonomy. Robert had high autonomy in selecting his activities and organising his own leisure activities. He stated

My family is also proud of me because despite having Down's syndrome I have lots of activities to do...My mother said, 'Robert, I'm proud of you because you are very busy all the time with your meetings for disabled people, helping and supporting people with learning disabilities'.

The other five informants could not move around independently in their lives and most of the leisure activities which they pursued in the community were organised by their families or carers. For example, Lisa Watkins was not allowed to go out with anybody, so all the activities she followed out of the home were with her parents and sister.

I go shopping with my sister on Saturday...I go to watch football matches at Northern town United Stadium sometimes with my dad and I like it. I like to visit restaurants as well... I like going on holiday abroad with my family.

The only activity that Lisa had done with her friend (workmate) was swimming for an hour per week, and this was also with her father's permission.

The stories showed that most leisure activities of the six informants were passive (for example listening to music, and watching TV). Therefore, the stories support the findings of the Cheseldine and Jeffree (cited in Richardson et al, 1993: 432) which noted that leisure activities were likely to be passive for people with learning difficulties. However, it is worth noting that Robert Savage and Sally James had participated in the Special Olympics. Hence:

Since 1993 I have won 25 medals at various distances including 13 Gold, 6 Silver and 6 bronzes...I was a member of the England team, and I got a gold medal in Special Olympics for the England team...I got most of my medals in swimming, some in football, and running.

(Robert Savage)

The stories showed that most leisure activities were organised by their families who perceived their disabled children as ‘incompetent adults.’ Secondly, informants who had engaged with leisure activity in the community spent little time on their activities. For example Lisa Watkins went swimming for an hour a week. Thirdly, the social setting in which the informants had engaged with leisure activities were few and were segregated settings like The Gateway Club.

Membership in self-advocacy group as a method of social inclusion

Self advocacy groups highlight how those with learning difficulties connect with the wider disability movement (Chappell et al, 2001) and provide ‘a place in which self-advocacy can potentially be supported’ (Goodley, 2000: 201). In this regard, self-advocacy is the way that people with learning difficulties would get the chance to recognise and to exercise their political rights and convey their voices to others in society (Goodley, 2000; 2003). Self-advocacy enable people to self-assess their needs and seek out the best ways of living independently (Ward cited in PMSU, 2005: 74). Thus:

Independent living is not just about being able to live in your own home—though that is often part of it for many disabled people. Rather, independent living is all about providing disabled people with choice, empowerment; and freedom...Independent living does not mean that disabled people are expected to do everything for themselves—but they are expected have the biggest say in what they do and how they live their lives, and to take responsibility for their lives (PMSU, 2005: 8).

It is clear that self-advocacy can have a significant effect on the lives of people with learning difficulties. As Emerson et al (2005) reported that one in thirty of people with learning difficulties in their study attended self-advocacy groups. The stories showed that out of the six informants, only Robert Savage had experience of belonging to and working in a self-advocacy group and, therefore experience of the benefits that group membership can bring.

Working at the self-advocacy group is very important for me. I think the self-advocacy groups are important for all people with learning disabilities. Sometimes people aren’t treated the same as everyone else in the community so self-advocacy groups help us to speak out for ourselves. To speak out for our rights. We don’t want to be told what to do. We want to know about a lot of things then choose what we want for ourselves. We want to make our own choices about jobs, where we live, holidays, relationships and being ourselves. We want to have the chance to show that

we can live and work and be a part of the community the same as everyone else. We want to be important in our communities. We want to have independent lives. So, the self-advocacy group lets us speak out about everything in our lives like social life, accommodation, employment, benefit, day services, education, leisure activities and any issues for people with learning difficulties in society (Robert Savage in Norouzi & Savage, 2005).

One of the key benefits that self-advocacy groups give to people with learning difficulties is employment. Robert Savage, as a self-advocate with learning difficulties learnt various skills which enabled him to be independent in many aspects of his life as a result of joining Northern town Self-advocacy group. Further, he has had the opportunity to work as a personnel and fundraising officer there. This study supports the findings of the Goodley (2000) study which showed that self-advocacy groups can 'Provide(s) possible employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties' (p. 210).

Self-advocacy groups also provide many work opportunities for non-disabled people who worked as advisors with people with learning difficulties. The results of this study highlighted that self-advocacy groups can provide valuable work opportunities for people with learning difficulties and participating in mainstream society.

The stories showed that the other five informants had no experiences of membership in any self-advocacy groups. Julia Martin and Sheila Davies only had experiences of belonging to and attending the The Gateway Club for two hours a week, and the other informants had no membership in any groups. Therefore, most informants were excluded from the benefit of involvement in self-advocacy groups. The stories highlighted that most informants had very limited choice and autonomy to control their own lives. Robert Savage however was relatively autonomous and had gained a lot of skills through working in self-advocacy groups. Perhaps, if Robert Savage had not been involved with self-advocacy, he would not be able to be as independent. Therefore, the stories support the findings of the Goodley (2000, 2003) studies which highlighted that self-advocacy had a key role in the lives of people with learning difficulties.

Overall, the stories showed that further on exclusion of the informants from mainstream employment, most of them had very limited personal autonomy. Griffiths (cited in Lawson, 2003: 118) notes that personal autonomy is one of the important adult statuses. Why does personal autonomy not apply to people with learning difficulties? Why do most parents decide what their disabled children should do and where they should go? Theoretically, all disabled people are citizens and have equal rights (DRC,

2004; PMSU, 2005). However, the reality showed the opposite. *Why are people with learning difficulties not accorded the full range of rights that other citizens have?* A lot of evidence shows that there are many ‘socio-structural and ideological barriers to the exercise of full citizenship rights by people with learning difficulties’ (Walmsley, 1991: 219; PMSU, 2005). They are seen as second class citizens (Hughes, 2004: 64), and viewed as ‘less than’ other citizens in society (Hasler, 2004: 232). Lawson (2003: 118) emphasises that the perception of non-disabled people of people with learning difficulties as ‘forever children’ deny their citizenship rights. Similarly, Pavey (2003: 59) emphasises that ‘the concept of the learning disabled person as childlike is pervasive, and insidious.’

It has already been noted that having a paid job; valuing people with learning difficulties in the community; shopping with their own money; going on holiday; marriage; and supporting a family were aspirations of the informants. Getting a paid job in mainstream placement was the main aspiration of the six informants, but is this realistic? Is it only a dream for people with learning difficulties? The stories showed many experiences of social exclusion. Because of such exclusion, perhaps, getting a paid job is a dream which people with learning difficulties must not expect to come true while society views them as ‘incompetent adults’ and ignores them in many aspects of their everyday lives. It is essential for service providers to change this dream to reality by changing the negative ideology and providing adequate support for people with learning difficulties, as is the case for other citizens.

Conclusion

Based on the epistemological stance of this research and a model of my research journey (explored in Chapter Four), in this chapter, I investigated the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of the post-Valuing People White Paper by doing six life stories and considering case files of 200 employees. This research began by investigating the individual factors which affected the employment of people with learning difficulties as indicated in position 1, ‘individual materialist’ (see Chapter Four). The individual-materialist position focuses on individual factors and views people with learning difficulties as ‘Incompetent Adults’ (Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 142). There is an assumption that people with learning difficulties are unemployed or work in very poor circumstances because of their individual impairment

which portrays them as a group unable to work. The work related individual factors of people with learning difficulties were addressed by questioning the informants and their parents. The results showed that lack of qualifications and the difficulties faced by some informants in changing money were barriers to employment for them. The results of this study supported the individual-materialist in the way that individual impairment affected the employment of people with learning difficulties. However, this study determined that these types of personal limitations were often the consequence of structural barriers and not specifically nor wholly a product of impairment or level of impairment per se.

The individual-idealist position that focuses on cognitive interaction and the affective experiences of the informants sees disability as the product of personal experience and the negation of social roles between individuals. This research investigated the affective and attitudinal experiences of people with learning difficulties. The results showed several experiences of exclusion of the informants in many aspects of their lives: exclusion from mainstream education; having low educational standards in special education; having poor employment circumstances; limited friendships; lacking mainstream leisure; lacking self-determination, autonomy and freedom; and lacking membership in any group in society. Despite emphasising the UK government's objectives in enabling more people with learning difficulties 'to participate in all forms of employment, wherever possible in paid work and to make a valued contribution to the world of work' (DoH, 2001: 26), the results of this study showed that all informants had experiences of working full-time in several placements of low occupational status with no wages, having long lengths of service with current employers and not having paid employment. In this regard, many issues in the lives of the six informants emphasised their exclusion from full participation in mainstream society. As a result of the frequent several exclusions suffered by the six informants, I beg the question: Are people with learning difficulties citizens? The theory of citizenship emphasises equality of civil, political, and social rights for every citizens (Marshall cited in Kay & Tisdall, 2003: 21). However, the fact is that most people with learning difficulties in this research are denied their rights, particularly their right to paid employment. The individual-idealist position therefore provides a contrast with impairment based models which helps us understand how the nature of interaction often results in exclusion. On its own though these explanations are also insufficient.

Position 3, the social creationist position, which views disability as a social construct-the idealist product of a society developing within a specific cultural context adds further to the interpretation of the data. In this research, the cultural barriers to the employment of people with learning difficulties were considered by investigating the experiences and perspectives of people with learning difficulties. In addition, from this position, the study moved to position 4, the social constructionist position, in which disability 'can be regarded as the material relations of power arising from the development of political economy and/or patriarchy within a specific historical context. Therefore, the political, structural and physical barriers within society which prevent this group from gaining paid employment were considered by reviewing their experiences and perspectives. The results showed that most informants are marginalised from gaining paid employment through the socio-structural and ideological barriers in society (PMSU, 2005); not because of their individual impairment. Of course, the study indicated that the individual impairments of the informants affected their level of education and their qualifications. However, the stories highlighted that most informants did not have access to mainstream education and employment as a result of many socio, cultural, structural and physical barriers within society, such as employers' negative attitudes, low parental expectations, inadequate education, losing state benefit, and a lack of employment opportunities. Having a paid job; valuing people with learning difficulties in the community; shopping with their own money; going on holiday; marriage; and supporting a family were aspirations of the informants. In this regard, getting a paid job in mainstream placement was the main aspiration of the six informants, but is this realistic? Is it only a dream for people with learning difficulties? The results of this study showed many experiences of social exclusion. Because of such exclusion, perhaps, getting a paid job is a dream which the informants must not expect to come true while society views them as 'incompetent adults' and ignores them in many aspects of their everyday lives. This study indicated that out of the 200 employees, 49% were paid and 51% were unpaid. Among people who were paid, most of them received more than the minimum hourly wage. The results of this study while supporting the DRC (2004) argument that it is pleasing that rates of employment among disabled people have risen in recent years as more and more employers have adopted better employment practices. The results also emphasise the ability of the informants to work. If people with learning difficulties were 'incompetent adults', 49% of the 200 informants would not be able to get good paid

jobs. Therefore, this study suggest that it is essential for service providers to change the dream of the informants in terms of 'gaining paid job' to reality by changing (social constructionist) the negative ideology towards people with learning difficulties and providing adequate support for them, as is the case for other citizens. In this regard, the findings point towards a number of ways in which services can be improved for the informants in the community: providing a more flexible benefit system; increasing supported employment; and providing mainstream education and employment.

Chapter Eight: Mainstream employment for people with learning difficulties: the experiences and perspectives of employers

Introduction

This chapter addresses the second research question ‘How are people with learning difficulties experienced and perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces?’ through a thematic analysis of the experiences and perspectives of employers. As is mentioned in Chapter Five, to address this question, I selected the informants from employers who were proactively working with employees with learning difficulties in mainstream workplaces. These employers were among those who cooperated with the supported employment agencies and Disability Employment Team Services in employing people with learning difficulties. I used a survey questionnaire for 21 employers and 12 semi-structured interviews with employers. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. The interviews were transcribed and the information from the survey questionnaire was read and organised under thematic headings. A lot of the information from the interviews and survey questionnaires was similar. I grouped all similar information based on subjects and themes. I have analysed my data in terms of the following themes:

- What is meant by the term ‘mainstream employment/workplaces’ for people with learning difficulties?
- Employers’ perceptions of employees with learning difficulties in mainstream workplaces
- Competency of employees with learning difficulties
- Employment barriers: structural or individual? The view of employers
- Problems at work
- Overcoming the barriers

What is meant by the term ‘mainstream employment/workplaces’ for people with learning difficulties?

The existing literature on employment (see Chapter Three) tends to focus on supporting people with learning difficulties to get ‘meaningful work’ in mainstream workplaces or mainstream employment. There has been much debate about the kinds of employment provisions for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties in the last few decades. Debate has touched on sheltered employment (Beyer et al, 2003), sheltered work in segregated settings (Simons & Watson, 1998), integrated employment (Pannell & Simons, 2000; Wilson, 2003), open employment and supported employment (Beyer et al, 2004; Wilson, 2003) and mainstream employment (DoH, 2001). Sheltered employment is a kind of work in segregated or sheltered workshops. These workshops were often set up by local authorities and organisations such as Remploy in the immediate post-war years to employ war disabled people who had difficulty working in integrated settings after they became disabled (Beyer et al, 2003; Simons & Watson, 1998). The sheltered employment was completely segregated and its payment was also very low (Simons & Watson, 1998: 16). Since 1985, the government has provided a subsidy for employers taking on disabled workers through the Supported Placement Scheme (SPS) to support disabled people in finding jobs in ordinary companies or integrated placements (where non-disabled people work) (Beyer et al, 2003: 2). As has been mentioned in Chapter Three, the supported employment agencies have an important role in assisting disabled people to find and maintain paid employment in integrated settings (Pannell and Simons, 2000) or in open employment defined by Wilson (2003) as a job with the principle of a ‘real’ or ‘normal’ job for people with learning difficulties leading to an expectation that they will successfully negotiate all the tasks expected of non-disabled workers (p. 114).

Skrtic (1995) emphasises that special education appeared from practical criticism of public education in the twentieth century, and the way it is practiced today is counter to criticisms of earlier special education models, practices, and tools.’ He argues two important episodes for special education:

The first episode is the “mainstreaming” debate, which occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s, a period in which the field’s traditional special classroom model was criticized and subsequently replaced with the mainstreaming model. The second episode, is the “inclusion” debate, which began in the 1980s with sharp criticism of the mainstreaming model and arguments for a more integrated or inclusive approach to special education programming (Skrtic, 1995: 77).

Therefore, according to various definitions, for people with learning difficulties, a 'real job' would pay 'real' (ie market rate) wages and would be with a mainstream employer (Wilson, 2003; Beyer et al, 2003; Pannell & Simons, 2000). Similarly, the literature in the USA (Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Wehman, 1996b, Rusch et al, 1991, Olson et al, 2001; Gray et al, 2000) defined 'real jobs' for people with learning difficulties as paid work in integrated settings. However, the 'real job' has been defined as that which 'would otherwise be done by a non-disabled worker' (AFSE cited in Wilson, 2003: 102). Further, 'meaningful work' is paid employment in the job market that enable people with learning difficulties to have full participation in mainstream society. Meaningful work will be considered further in Chapter Nine.

Employers' perceptions of employees with learning difficulties in mainstream workplaces

How employers perceive people with learning difficulties will be a major factor influencing their willingness (or reluctance) to employ them in their workplace. According to Finlay and Lyons (1998), in the UK, people with learning difficulties are frequently seen as 'sick, eternal children, menaces, or objects of ridicule' (p. 38). It has already been noted in Chapter Three that the attitudes of many employers towards people with learning difficulties were negative. Employers often perceived disabled people as 'unable to work, and a social problem' (Walmsley, 1992: 222), and 'not productive workers' or as employees with lower rates of productivity than non-disabled employees (Johnson et al, 1988; Blanck, 1991). As a result of that, employers have concerns about increased costs of employing disabled workers in their workplace. They are consequently, unprepared to become more flexible in relation to issues like working hours (Kitchin et al, 1998).

In this research, I inquired into how people with learning difficulties are experienced and perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces. This study showed that all employers, whether respondents to survey questionnaires or interviewees, expressed themselves to be sympathetic to the idea of employing people with learning difficulties in their workplaces. When I asked the views of employers about the assumption that 'adults with learning difficulties are unable to work', I found some differences between responses to interviews and to the survey questionnaire. Out of 21 respondents to the survey questionnaire, 11 people agreed that people with learning difficulties were

unable to work, thus supporting the findings of other research. This was, perhaps, because, employers did not recognise the abilities of people with learning difficulties and were concerned about their 'competency and dependability' as Craig and Body (1990: 41) argued.

However, all employers who were interviewed stated that employees with learning difficulties were able to work as well as their non-disabled colleagues. For example, Maria, the manager of a supermarket stated:

People with learning disabilities are able to work the same as the non-disabled colleagues. They are able to do the job as well as somebody else can do it so there is no problem.

Due to the positive perceptions of Maria, she employed a few people with learning difficulties. Therefore, the interviews did not support the findings of Craig and Body (1990) and Kitchen et al (1998) studies which argued that people with learning difficulties were unable to work.

Competency of employees with learning difficulties

The informants were asked, 'What encouraged you to employ people with learning difficulties?' The 21 employers who responded to the survey questionnaire noted seven reasons. The ability of people with learning difficulties to work was mentioned by six informants; a moral responsibility to employ people with learning difficulties, by five informants; equal opportunity by five informants; adequate support from supported employment agencies and being loyal and working hard were reported by nine people (three people per factor); qualifications of people with learning difficulties and previous experience of employers working with people with learning difficulties were reported by four informants (two people per factor).

The employers who were interviewed gave three factors: the ability of people with learning difficulties to work, equal opportunity, and being a good and reliable worker. Most interviewees stated that the ability of people with learning difficulties was an important factor. Loyalty, punctuality, reliability, industry, helping workmates, being polite, and friendliness were reported by most employers as advantages. Suzy, the manager of a wholesale market noted that she had given paid employment to four adults

with learning difficulties because they were better workers because they worked all the time. She stated:

People with learning difficulties are very good workers...they are very good on the work, they work very well...they work from the moment they come to the moment they go home, they are good with customers, they are really good.

Equality of opportunity was another important factor. For example, Andy, the manager of a greengrocery shop, said:

These people are still part of day to day society and they've got to be given the same opportunities as everyone else. They've got to be given the chance to prove themselves, to gain employment, to stand on their own two feet, to work, to earn their own money, it gives them self respect and a bit of confidence.

Most employers stated that people with learning difficulties were able to do jobs as well as their non-disabled colleagues. However, while doing my fieldwork, I realised that most employees with learning difficulties were unpaid as is mentioned in Chapter Seven. Sheila Davies was one of the employees with learning difficulties who had worked in a variety of different placements for 22 years. Her employers stated that Sheila worked just as well as her non-disabled colleagues. Nevertheless, she still was unpaid. When I asked her employers why this was, he blamed the benefit system.

I think the issue in getting paid employment for Sheila is the benefits. So she is earning to disregards at the moment and she gets £12 a week for her job. If she wants to get paid employment job, she would lose her benefits.

Some employers stated that they had employed people with learning difficulties for reasons to do with equality of opportunity. What is the meaning of 'equality of opportunity'? Roemer (2002) defines equality of opportunity in social choice theory as 'rendering the sets of choices available to different individuals the same' (p. 455). Based on that definition of the equality of opportunity, employees with learning difficulties should have real jobs with real wages like their non-disabled colleagues. Why were most people with learning difficulties not equally treated? Why did most of them work voluntarily and receive only 70p or £2.20 per day? The experience of Lisa Watkins has been described in Chapter Six. She worked as a full-time kitchen assistant for four years in a restaurant, but only received 70p per day. Is this equal opportunity? If there was equality of opportunity, why would most people with learning difficulties be

unpaid? This is, perhaps, because, the employers do not believe in equal opportunities and the ability of people with learning difficulties to work like their non-disabled colleagues. There is also the possibility of exploitation. Most employers pay their employees with learning difficulties less than their employees with no learning difficulties and then claim that it is to protect employees with learning difficulties from losing benefit. The fact is that most employers challenge the equality of opportunity requirement. Perhaps, if the employers believed in equality of opportunity and in the ability of the people with learning difficulties, they would offer them paid employment as Suzy, the manager of a wholesale market had done in the case of four employees with learning difficulties whom she employed. These four were paid as any other employee. This study showed that there was a huge difference between what some employers said about equality of opportunity and the ability of people with learning difficulties with how they actually treated them in terms of paid employment.

As is mentioned in Chapter Seven, most people with leaning difficulties were unpaid. Why? Is it because of their learning difficulties or is it because of other barriers related to society? In the following section, the views of employers will be considered

Employment barriers: structural or individual? The view of employers

It has already been noted in Chapter Three that there were structural and individual barriers to employing people with learning difficulties. This study also showed several employment barriers. To investigate the vocational barriers, the informants were asked, 'What do you think the vocational barriers for adults with learning difficulties are?' The 21 employers who responded to the survey questionnaire mentioned eleven reasons. A lack of qualifications was reported by seven people; a lack of employer's awareness about the ability of people with learning difficulties was mentioned by five people; having difficulties in communication with others at work, a lack of confidence of people with learning difficulties, a lack of supervision at work, and a lack of time and employers' concern about extra supervision for people with learning difficulties were reported by 12 people (3 people each reason); level of disability and ignorance were noted by four informants (two people each factor) and; having protective parents and carers, the benefit trap, and a lack of options and jobs for people with learning difficulties were reported by three informants (one person each factor).

The employers who were interviewed gave five employment barriers: lack of employers' awareness about the ability of people with learning difficulties, limited ability of people with learning difficulties to work, the benefit system, shortage of job opportunities and transport problems. These barriers were classified into two main groups: structural and individual barriers.

Structural barriers

This study suggested that there are some structural barriers including a lack of employers' awareness, inflexibility of the benefit system, a lack of suitable job opportunities, a lack of supervision, having protective parents and carers and transport problems. **Lack of employers' awareness:** Most employers whether interviewees or respondents to survey questionnaires, stated that a lack of employers' awareness about the ability of people with learning difficulties was an important barrier to their employment. For example, Maria, the manager of a supermarket commented:

I think sometimes people assume that if people have learning disabilities that they are stupid and they are unable to do any job...where if you have somebody who has never come across somebody with learning difficulties or if you get somebody who's not used to dealing with any sort of person at all in a disabled function, they just really find it hard. They don't speak to them normally, they speak to them loud, and they shout.

This study identified that employers' negative perception of the ability of people with learning difficulties as a major barrier to employing people with learning difficulties as Bob, the manager of a café who offered paid jobs to three people with learning difficulties said:

Well, public perception. Well not just perception but perception is a big one because people perceive that they won't be able to do a job. Fear, I think people are scared of employing somebody out of the usual and it's a very big staff for my staff to actually accept somebody.

Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Kitchen et al (1998), and Craig and Body (1990) which noted that employers do not employ people with learning difficulties because they do not see their abilities. Beyer et al (2004), Gosling and Cotterill (2000) argued that the negative attitude of employers is because many of them have little or no experience of working with people with learning difficulties. My study

also found this to be the case. For example, Paul, who had been the manager of several workplaces for nearly forty years, noted that for the first 20 years of his management he did not employ any person with learning difficulties because he was frightened of working with them. However, after starting work with people with learning difficulties, his attitude became positive, and his perception toward them changed.

It is worth noting that some barriers like a lack of qualifications, a lack of options and jobs, a lack of employers' awareness, and employers' concern about extra supervision (lack of time) were given by the employers who had had no experience of working with employees with learning difficulties. In addition, the experiences of employers who had worked with employees with learning difficulties in this study showed that people with learning difficulties had enough ability to work, and to participate in induction programmes like their non-disabled colleagues. For example, Maria said:

They [employees with learning difficulties] have induction when they actually start with the company and if somebody had slight difficulties, we have to go through with them on a one to one and work through it with them...they have exactly the same training as the other 350 colleagues, it'll just be the case of rather than in a group of says 4 or 5 people it would just be on a one to one basis. They have training up until they fully understand the job.

Inflexibility of the benefit system: The present benefit system works against people with learning difficulties getting paid jobs (Gosling & Cotterill, 2000). The views of people with learning difficulties in Chapter Seven indicated that if people with learning difficulties gained paid employment, they would lose their benefit. In this study, the views and experiences of employers also showed that if people with learning difficulties worked, they would lose their benefits. For example, Jon, the manager of the café stated that if Sheila who is one of his employees with learning difficulties gets a paid job, she would lose her benefit. Jon stated that he felt guilty using employees with learning difficulties as volunteers or having them doing unpaid work experience for many years, but he blamed the benefit system. This study supports the findings of the Gosling and Cotterill (2000), Beyer et al (2004) and Roulstone et al (2003) studies which highlighted that the benefit system prevented people from gaining paid employment.

Shortage or a lack of job opportunities: It has already been noted in Chapter Three that a lack of job opportunities for disabled people was a barrier to the employment of people with learning difficulties. This study supports the findings of the Loumidis et al

(2001) and Ashworth et al (2003) studies which showed that a lack of job opportunities was a barrier to employing disabled people.

A lack of supervision: Unavailability of employment support was one of the employment barriers for people with learning difficulties (Beyer et al, 2004; Wilson, 2003). Supporting disabled people at work is essential to maintain their employment because the risk of losing employment among people with learning difficulties is higher than with any non-disabled people (Wilson, 2003). This study showed that employers stated that a lack of supervision and the employers' concerns about extra supervision was an employment barrier for people with learning difficulties. This was, perhaps, because people with learning difficulties faced more difficulties than non-disabled people at work and most employers were concerned about lack of time and extra supervision for employees with learning difficulties. They needed extra supervision by resources from outside of the workplace to overcome their problems at work. This study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2004) and Wilson (2003) which noted that unavailability of employment support was one of the employment barriers for people with learning difficulties.

Transport problem: It has already been noted in Chapter Three that transport problems were a barrier to work for people with learning difficulties. This study also showed that. For example, Cathy, the manager of a café, stated:

I think it is mainly transport, that's the only reason Ian doesn't come now, he can't get the transport.

This study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2003, 2004) and Wilson (2003) studies that transport problem was a barrier to work for disabled people, particularly people with learning difficulties.

Individual barriers

The study highlighted some individual barriers to employing people with learning difficulties including a lack of qualifications, difficulties in communication and a lack of confidence.

A lack of qualifications: It has already been noted in Chapter Three that lower educational qualifications and less labour market experience for disabled people would reduce their chances of getting paid jobs (PMSU, 2005). In this regard, Rusch (1992) argues that in securing and maintaining employment, people with ‘mental retardation’ need to gain ‘production skills and effective social skills’ (p. 405). Without adequate skills in these areas, people with mental retardation are likely to encounter difficulty in finding and maintaining a job.’ Similarly, Beyer et al (2004) assert that people with learning difficulties need to get and to improve their social skills, ‘such as communication, understanding the norms of behaviour within the workforce and not going over any line of acceptability or appropriateness’ (p. 53). In this study employers perceived that a lack of qualifications of people with learning difficulties was a major barrier to employing. Out of the seven barriers which were reported by the respondents to the survey questionnaire, a lack of qualifications had the highest frequency (seven people). This was, because, as it argued in Chapter Seven, people with learning difficulties had inadequate education.

Difficulty in communication was another barrier which was reported in this study. Day services’ staff stated that people with learning difficulties need to improve their social skills, such as communication, if they are to become employed (Beyer et al, 2004: 53). This study showed that some employers perceived that a difficulty in communication was an employment barrier. That was revealed by 3 of the respondents to the survey questionnaires. This was because people with learning difficulties did not have suitable education or maybe because of their individual limitations. Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2004) study that social skills are important factors when getting and keeping jobs.

A lack of confidence has already been noted in Chapter Three as an important barrier to employment. This study indicated that a lack of confidence was reported by 3 employers of the respondents to the survey questionnaires thus supporting. Therefore, the result of this study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2003: 40) study.

Problems at work

Beyer et al (2004) reported that in their study, people with learning difficulties had stopped doing their previous jobs because of 'company closure, that they no longer liked their job or the people they worked with; they became ill, or could no longer cope physically with the demands of the job; being sacked; and support from services being withdrawn' (p. 34). I asked employers whether they had employee with learning difficulties who had left the job and if they had why they left. The employers who were interviewed stated that they had no experiences of working with employees with learning difficulties who had left the workplace. However, some employers who responded to the survey questionnaires had worked with employees who had left their work for different reasons. The respondents noted eight reasons: getting a job elsewhere, sickness, not interested in work, lack of concentration on work, transport access difficulties, nerves at work, and being dismissed. It is worth noting that most employers noted that their employees who had left their jobs did so because they had got a job elsewhere with the help of supported employment providers.

This study showed that misunderstandings, loss of temper, and poor numeracy skills had been experienced by some employers. The employers who responded to the survey questionnaires noted that they had no real problems with their employees with learning difficulties at work. However, out of the 12 employers who were interviewed, three stated that their employees had had some difficulties. One employer said that her employee had problems with numeracy and giving change, but the problems were solved by some training. Andy, the manager of a greengrocery shop, stated that his employee was very good in everything, but he had some misunderstandings and lost his temper at work on a few occasions. He said:

The biggest thing is Roy generally doesn't like to work upstairs in the storeroom and when you ask him and you repeatedly ask him and he's not doing it if you are a bit strong with him and tell him, that's when he loses his temper, that's when he starts throwing tantrums, but after about 10 minutes he calms down, comes and apologises and gets on with what he should be doing...Yes, on a few occasions when we have brought stock from upstairs in the storeroom, stocked up the shelves, and on a few occasions we have part boxes of produce to go back upstairs which should have gone in a cool room, and Roy has actually thrown them in the skip which has caused problems. Obviously, because it is waste, unnecessary waste, he's chucking stuff away what's basically good for selling...Other things...it could be when he is filling the shelves up, obviously we are working with fresh produce, it has got to be rotated, and stock has got to be constantly turned over to keep it fresh. Sometimes Roy gets a bit confused and puts the fresh stuff on top of the old stuff which then creates waste....he

obviously knows that but I think he gets a bit confused and doesn't understand what people are actually telling him, and like I say he tries to do it off his own back sometimes without asking and that creates problems, but basically he's the kind of person who if you tell him he'll listen...Generally, he has been quite good at everything, he's got on with his work and he's done it in a good manner basically.

Jon, the manager of Rambert Café, stated that one of his employees has had a poor attendance at work, but he had solved the problem later. He noted:

One of our staff lived on his own, I think when he had worked before his mother when she was alive, she had always got him out of bed and got him off to work in the morning, you know, made sure he got the bus. So that wasn't there. His sister lived down the road but she had a family of her own, you know, she wasn't in a position to get him out of bed in a morning, and quite rightly why should she be and we worked very hard with him on his attendance, and in the end, I gave him a formal warning, an oral warning you know...if this doesn't improve this will become a disciplinary matter. So I had to get, for me, quite heavy and then it was fine. Since then there has been no problem because he doesn't want to lose his job.

Regarding poor communication between employees with learning difficulties and their non-disabled colleagues, most employers had no problem with their employees at work. Only one employer stated that one of his employees had been bullied by his non-disabled colleague. He stated:

Philips in particular, had a problem with one of employees who used to work here. He had a [? altercation] whereby he used to pull his leg and Philips took it seriously, but we do not allow that to carry on [the manager asked the non-disabled employee to leave].

In relation to communication with customers, most employers stated that their employees had no problem in this area. Only one of the employers stated that one of her employees was very affectionate, and did not control his space with the customers at work. She said:

Mike gets very excited about stuff and if he is trying to help a customer he will get quite enthusiastic and he can sometimes be in somebody's space. He is very up close, he is very affectionate, he will always be hugging and kissing people and we have had to try and tell him to try and curb that, if it's a customer it isn't appropriate to be giving them a hug or anything. But he is very affectionate, he is a lovely man, and he will do anything for anybody. But that's been really the only sort of downside sometimes, because some of the customers will say he is too near my wife, tell him to go away. He

doesn't mean any harm by this, and when you talk to him he will say, yes well I know, but I was only trying to help. He does understand in a way, but a couple of weeks down the line he will be hugging a customer again but the majority of people accept that's how Mike is, he means no harm by it. Because he is really chatty then we don't have complaints or anything about him.

(Maria)

The above problems were reported by the employers of employees with learning difficulties. I will argue that non-disabled workers can face the same problems as workers with learning difficulties. We therefore, cannot say that these types of problems are related only to people with learning difficulties. Perhaps, the problems occur with more frequency with people with learning difficulties than with non-disabled people. However, as is mentioned above, a lack of adequate education can be the cause of some of these problems faced by people with learning difficulties.

How employers would attempt to solve problems Most employers stated that they would try to solve the problem by getting help from the SEPs

If we did have problems with Roy we would contact Peter [the manager of the MAP], explain what had actually gone wrong and ask him to actually come and visit and see if there was anything he could do to speak to Roy...we would sit and have a talk, he'd talk to Roy ask him how he was doing, whether he was enjoying himself. If he'd got any problems and Roy generally used to sit there and just grin at him and say everything was alright, he would usually agree with everything what was said to him.

(Andy)

Two employers argued that if they had a problem with their employees, they would solve the problem by contacting and getting help from the employees' parents or carers.

For example, Maria explained:

Really we get involved with their parents if we had a problem. We had a particular issue where the guy on the back door had gone and broken one of his fingers and he did not report it in the accident book and that is something we have to make sure that everybody does, in case there is any comeback. We've also got to report stuff to the local authority. He did not do this, so when he came back to work, we found out about this accident so we had to tell him, and he did not put it into the accident book, which all colleagues have to do...he did not report the accident because he did not want to get anybody into trouble. He thought that he would get himself and the back door manager, the warehouse manager, into trouble...So we explained why he had to do it, for his own benefit, and so we know, and we can let the local authorities know, if it was a serious injury. We explained all that to him and

then he said, "Could you ring my mum and just explain to my mum" so his mum and dad were coming in anyway to shop so we invited them in and we went through it all with the mum and dad. So we've also gone through some training with him and he knows what to do, when to do it, if he has an accident who he has got to contact and he works quite closely with the warehouse manager.

I observed that in some workplaces, the work environment for people with learning difficulties was very supportive. This was, perhaps, because most employers had received adequate support from various SEPs. For example, all employers stated that they had some training from SEPs and they had enough information about their employees with learning difficulties. For instance, Helia, a shop manager said:

We're aware of their [people with learning difficulties] difficulties because we had good induction from the people at Far House [SEPs], so we just speak clearly and reiterate if they've understood and if they don't, they will ask, not a problem.

This study highlighted that most employers were interested in working with people with learning difficulties referred by SEPs because they knew that the SEPs provided enough supervision for them at work. In addition, if employers had any problems with employees with learning difficulties, they would have adequate support from the SEPs to solve the problems.

The employers also noted that they would have adequate support from various SEPs for employees with learning difficulties' inductions, particularly if they had specific problem or needed specific skills for doing their jobs. For instance, some had difficulty in catching the right bus to work. Therefore, all the support workers had supported the employees by going to work with them and showing which bus to catch. For example,

Sometimes he [Roy] had some misunderstandings catching a bus (laugh). On one occasion about 6 year or 7 years ago, it could be longer, it might be 9 years when I first started working with him. We left work one Saturday afternoon the week before Christmas and Roy went to the bus station and got on the wrong bus. He caught the bus to Manchester instead of the bus to his house, and my boss at the time actually rang me at 6 o'clock, half past 6, and told me that Roy had not arrived home after he'd left work at 4 o'clock. So we all got in our cars and went looking for him. It took us about 2 hours to find him but eventually we found him and got him back home in one piece. He had done that on a couple of occasions, got on wrong bus and ended up having to catch a bus from somewhere else, but he knows now the bus he has to catch...he has learnt his lesson with buses now with the help of Peter. Roy gets on the right bus the majority of time.

(Andy)

This study showed that most problems for people with learning difficulties which were experienced by their employers at work and other factors which prevented people with learning difficulties from gaining paid employment could be overcome by some factors facilitating employment of people with learning difficulties which I will describe in the following section.

Overcoming barriers

Informants were asked what would make it easier for them to employ people with learning difficulties. The 21 employers who responded to the survey questionnaire suggested six ways of overcoming barriers. Out of these, increasing disability awareness by providing training for employers was reported by six informants; providing suitable training for people with learning difficulties was mentioned by six employers; providing more supported employment agencies to support employers at work was noted by four informants; integrating people with learning difficulties at school and in the labour market was reported by 3 employers; increasing voluntary/work experience for people with learning difficulties was mentioned by two employers; encouraging employers to employ people with learning difficulties was reported by two informants, and one person had no idea.

The employers who were interviewed stated three ways of overcoming employment barriers: increasing employers' awareness, providing supported employment, and providing a more flexible benefit system. Overall, the ways of overcoming barriers were divided into two main categories: individual and structural factors.

Individual factors

Individual factors required the provision of suitable training, voluntary work and work experience for people with learning difficulties.

Providing suitable training for people with learning difficulties: It has already been noted in Chapter Three that providing adequate training and improving personal, social,

practical, and cognitive skills²² for people with learning difficulties were essential in getting jobs. In this study, providing adequate training was suggested as one of the ways of overcoming barriers by the respondents to the survey questionnaires. Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2004:53) study which noted that providing suitable training and improving ‘vocational, personal, social and cognitive skills of people with learning difficulties were necessary in order for them to become employed’. In this regard, according to the PMSU (2005), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has duties under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to promote disability equality in all its programmes and to have regard to the needs of disabled learners. For example, from 2006 onwards, the LSC, should aim to increase the proportion of disabled learner, particularly those with learning difficulties to engage in education and training at all levels (p. 143).

Integrating people with learning difficulties in the labour market: Integrating people with learning difficulties into the non-segregated workplace provided them opportunities for interaction with non-disabled colleagues (Rusch, 1992). This was mentioned by three respondents to the survey questionnaires. The PMSU (2005) reported that the British government will provide the opportunity to consider completely new forms of integrated, person centred provision that will ‘be in the interests of public service reform and cost effectiveness; better meet the transition needs identified, whether from childhood to adulthood, between services, into independent living, or into retirement; and support both individuals and families’ (p. 179).

Increasing voluntary and work experience for people with learning difficulties: It has been argued as well in Chapter Three that people with learning difficulties who had no work experience were unable to find jobs and those who had participated in work experience at either school or college had managed to find jobs. This study suggested that providing more voluntary and work experience for people with learning difficulties would assist them in getting paid jobs. This study supports the findings of the Phelps and Hanley-Maxwell (1997), Kidd and Hornby (1993), and Thomson et al (1995) which highlighted that providing work experience is very helpful for people in getting a job.

²² “Personal skills, such as adaptability, responsibility and risk awareness. Social skills, such as communication, understanding the norms of behaviour within the workforce and not going over any line of acceptability or appropriateness. Practical skills, such as basic literacy and numeracy and skills specifically related to the job (the latter were seen by some as a prerequisite to employment). Cognitive skills, such as concentration and the ability to learn. An ability to recognise and adhere to the routines and rules of a working environment, including punctuality and discipline” (Beyer et al, 2004: 53).

Structural factors

Structural factors included increasing employer's awareness, encouraging employers to employ people with learning difficulties, providing a flexible benefit system and providing supported employment service for employers at work.

Increasing employers' awareness: In this study most employers, whether interviewees or respondents to survey questionnaires stated that increasing employers' awareness about the ability of people with learning difficulties was one of the important ways of overcoming barriers. For example, Claire, the manager of Spring Café, argued:

We have to educate other firms more about how good the people [with learning difficulties] can be, and how useful and how much they can actually do. I don't think that some companies realise just how much these people can do the job. Based on my working experience with employees with learning disabilities, they can do a lot of work, and they are very valuable.

This study showed that if employers work with people with learning difficulties, they would be interested in employing them. For instance, Andy had employed Roy Watson for 13 years. Andy stated that based on his work experiences with Roy, he was interested in employing more employees with learning difficulties at his workplace because he believed:

They [people with learning difficulties] are good workers, helping their colleagues, polite, always smart, well presented, and punctual.

Providing training for employers to increase the disability awareness of employers was suggested by those responding to survey questionnaires who had no experience of working with people with learning difficulties. They also suggested encouraging employers to employ people with learning difficulties; providing voluntary/work experience for people with learning difficulties in mainstream employment; encouraging employers to employ people with learning difficulties; and providing supported employment.

Providing more flexible benefit system: It was noted in Chapter Three that a flexible benefit system would increase the chances of people with learning difficulties getting paid jobs. Most employers stated that providing a more flexible benefit system was one of the ways of overcoming employment barriers. For example, Alan, the manager of a factory stated:

The benefit system does create some difficulties...because there are different benefits that apply to different people...the people who are on the benefits are very nervous about working because they fear they will lose their benefit. The central government has to provide some rules which let people to [sic] earn money without losing benefit.

This study supports the findings of other research which noted that a flexible benefit system is one of the ways of overcoming employment barriers.

Providing supported employment: There is a lack of support available to employers recruiting and retaining disabled employees (PMSU, 2005: 162). I noted in Chapter Three that providing supported employment services for employers increased the chance of employment for disabled people. Most employers²³ stated that supported employment agencies were important. Support included the provision of more supervision for people with learning difficulties at work, financial support, training for employers to inform them about the types of support available and how to support people with learning difficulties at work, voluntary work for people with learning difficulties before getting a paid job and, help for employees in solving their transportation problems. For example, Bob, the manager of a café, stated that providing support and training for employers made them aware of the ability of people with learning difficulties to work. It also supported the employers in overcoming the problems of people with learning difficulties at work. Bob stated

Employers need to have a link with somebody who understands the person [with learning difficulties], knows them from of old so that they know what they are going to be like, how they are going to behave in certain situations and that's invaluable. Somebody who is at the end of the phone for the manager, who all of a sudden, for instance Julie whose father died, it didn't hit her for seven or eight weeks and then all of a sudden she went off the rails, she became emotional and stropky and bad tempered. So we need the support there of somebody who knows how to deal with them outside the work side.

Most employers stated that providing training and giving more information about people with learning difficulties would encourage them to employ people with learning difficulties in their own companies. This study supports the findings of the Beyer et al

²³ Ten people out of 12 employers who were interviewed and 83.3% of the employers who responded to the survey questionnaires.

(2003, 2004) and Wilson (2003) that providing supported employment for employers increased the chances of employing people with learning difficulties.

Conclusion

In similar fashion to the conclusions of Chapter 7 I now elaborate further issues that arise using the four category model presented in Chapter 4. In this chapter I investigated the question, 'How are people with learning difficulties experienced and perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces?' by using a survey questionnaire completed by 21 employers and by conducting one-to-one interview with 12 employers. Individual factors which affected the employment of people with learning difficulties as indicated in position 1, 'individual materialist' (see Chapter Four) focuses on individual factors and views people with learning difficulties as 'Incompetent Adults' (Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 142). There is an assumption that people with learning difficulties are unemployed or work in very poor circumstances because of their individual impairment which portrays them as a group unable to work. The work-related individual factors of people with learning difficulties were addressed by a survey questionnaire and interviews with employers. The results showed that there were some individual factors affecting the employment of people with learning difficulties, such as a lack of qualifications, a lack of self-confidence and difficulty in communication. All employers stated that their employees with learning difficulties worked the same as their non-disabled colleagues. However, there were some problems, including misunderstandings in doing the job, loss of temper and poor numeracy skills. All the employers in this study however, stated that these difficulties were not critical and were solved by the supported employment agencies, later. The results of this study demonstrated that though an individual-materialist conception might be applied to aspects of people's work that these were issues that might be easily addressed and overcome by employers. Moreover the gains to employers of having people with learning difficulties in the workforce by far outweighed any costs of impairment-related reductions in output. Furthermore, this study determined that these types of personal limitations were often the consequence of structural barriers.

Position 2, the individual-idealist position, focuses on cognitive interaction and the affective experiences of the employers. The position sees disability as the product of

personal experience and the negation of social roles among individuals. This research investigated the affective and attitudinal experiences of employers.

The employers were sympathetic to the idea of employing people with learning difficulties, and they gave several reasons why they employed them: the ability of people with learning difficulties to work; equality of opportunities; moral responsibility of the employers to employ this group; adequate support from supported employment agencies; the character of the employees with learning difficulties (loyal, reliable and hard working); good qualifications and experiences of people with learning difficulties and; their previous experiences working with them.

Employers perceived their employees with learning difficulties positively. This was, perhaps, because they had the experience of working with them. Secondly, there were advantages as all the employers in this study argued that employees with learning difficulties were very loyal, reliable, hard working and as efficient as their non-disabled colleagues. Thirdly, the supported employment services which were offered by the SEPs affected the perceptions of employers about working with employees with learning difficulties. Most employers stated that SEPs had important benefits for them at work. SEPs increased employers' awareness of people with learning difficulties; provided financial support for employers and; helped the employers solve potential problems at work. The overwhelming sense in which employers related positive views of workers with learning difficulties and what they brought to the company both economically and in terms of their roles and relationships implies substantive support for their inclusion in the workforce.

The data also pointed to issues at a structural level in which disability is viewed as a 'social construct-the idealist product of a society developing within a specific cultural context' and 'can be regarded as the material relations of power arising from the development of political economy and/or patriarchy within a specific historical context'. These are the social creationist and social constructionist positions in the analytic model being applied in this thesis. In this research, the cultural barriers to the employment of people with learning difficulties were considered by investigating the experiences and perspectives of employers. Political, structural and physical barriers within society which prevent this group from gaining paid employment were also considered by reviewing the experiences and perspectives of employers. Such structural barriers included a lack of employers' awareness, inflexibility of the benefit system, a lack of suitable job opportunities, a lack of supervision, having protective parents and carers

and transport problems. Most employers stated that a lack of employer's awareness of the ability of people with learning difficulties and a lack of qualifications among people with learning difficulties were the major barriers to employing this group.

The findings of this chapter point towards a number of ways in which employment services can be improved for people with learning difficulties in society: increasing disability awareness; increasing the number of supported employment agencies; giving more on-the-job supervision to people with learning difficulties; increasing the provision of supported employment for employers working with employees with learning difficulties; improving the qualifications of people with learning difficulties by providing adequate vocational training in mainstream education; and by providing suitable employment opportunities in mainstream employment. This study showed that the supported employment services which were offered by the supported employment agencies had some benefits for the employers and encouraged them to employ people with learning difficulties.

CHAPTER NINE: Supported employment: opening up job opportunities to people with learning difficulties

Introduction

This chapter addresses the third research question ‘How do supported employment providers promote ‘meaningful work’ opportunities for people with learning difficulties?’ by providing a thematic analysis of the views and experiences of the eight supported employment providers (SEPs). As is mentioned in Chapter Five, to address this question, I conducted eight semi-structured-interviews with supported employment providers. I selected the informants from four supported employment agencies: Far House, Rambert, Spring, Rosmery, and MAP agency which is a private Workstep contractor.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. The interviews were transcribed and the information was read and organised under thematic headings. A lot of the information from the interviews was similar. I ground all similar information based on subjects and themes. I have analysed my data in terms of the following themes:

- The SEPs’ perceptions of employees with learning difficulties
- What is meant the term ‘meaningful work’ for people with learning difficulties?
- To what extent does supported employment programmes promote the opportunity for people with learning difficulties to access ‘meaningful work’?
- Barriers to meaningful work: the views and experiences of SEPs
- Ways of overcoming employment barriers: the views of the SEPs

The SEPs’ perceptions

It has already been noted in Chapter Three that non-disabled people often have negative perceptions of people with learning difficulties. This study showed that the perception of SEPs of employees with learning difficulties was positive. All SEPs believed that these employees were able to work as well as their non-disabled colleagues. Hence:

To you as an employer I would say a person with a learning disability, once they have learnt their job will give you 100% on that job at all times. At all times they will work...they are punctual, they are reliable.

(Fabian, a support worker of Far House)

When I asked the SEPs why most people with learning difficulties were unemployed or worked in low skill jobs, some of them mentioned their 'learning disabilities'. However, most SEPs believed that having a low skill job is not limited to people with learning difficulties. For example,

I think we have to be realistic here and say people with learning disabilities are rarely if at all going to reach a position where they would be in any way be in a management position or supervisory role. It requires far greater intellectual skill to work as a manager, supervisor or as a foreman than people with learning disabilities would ordinarily have. I think, we have to be realistic about the level or the position in a company that a person can attain. We also though have to remind ourselves that not everybody can be a manager, many people work in those companies, at the same level of job as people with learning disabilities, who do not have disabilities or difficulties themselves. Therefore, if you look to a large company with a workforce of 300 people, 250 people might be people who have got the same position within the company as people with learning difficulties working in the company.

(Peter, the manager of MAP)

All SEPs in this study believed that employers and non-disabled people in society needed to perceive positively.

We need to accept people for who they are and what they are capable of and like I say you shouldn't be focusing on the learning disability you should focus on the person.

(Alison, a support worker of Rambert)

A change in terminology from 'mentally defective' to 'mental handicap' to 'learning disabilities/difficulties' (Davies & Jenkins, 1997) is one of the important factors which helped to change attitudes. In this study, four out of the eight SEPs, used the label 'learning disabilities,' two used the label 'learning difficulties' and one each used the label 'learning difficulties' and 'learning disabilities'. Hastings and Remington (1993) rated 'learning difficulties and learning disabilities' as the least negative label. This research showed that all SEPs used positive labels. All of them believed that people with learning difficulties were 'capable' of working. As a result of their positive perceptions, all SEPs argued that people with learning difficulties should have the same access to employment as non-disabled people in order to benefit from the advantages of

work including: increasing self-esteem, confidence, and autonomy; making friends; earning money; gaining independence; enjoying life; changing attitudes; and increasing the quality of life. Hence:

I think employment is very good for people with learning disabilities because it improves the lifestyle of these people. We know from the few people who we place out there and who have got employment how their life has changed for the better...they no longer see themselves as a disabled person. Their self esteem grows so much and that is one of the thingsa lot of people have perhaps told them for most of their lives that they are not very good, they can't do anything, they are not worth the effort and taken a very negative attitude with them and what we have started to do is to say to these people, yes you can do it or we will look for something that you can do.

(Fabian)

All SEPs characterised employees with learning difficulties as punctual, reliable, willing, hard-working, capable, very helpful and trustworthy workers. This study did not support the findings of Craig and Body (1990) and Kitchen et al (1998) which noted that people with learning difficulties were unable to work. If employees with learning difficulties were identified by the SEPs as workers with many positive characteristics, why were most of them excluded from gaining 'meaningful work?' To answer the question, it is necessary to define meaningful work.

What does 'meaningful work' mean for people with learning difficulties?

As is mentioned in Chapter Eight, the existing literature on employment for people with learning difficulties tends to focus on how they are assisted in gaining 'meaningful work'. *What is meaningful work?* 'Work for those who can and security for those who cannot' is one of the important strategies of the British government (DWP, 1998, p iii). The meaning of work articulated in the above statement by the government is related to paid employment. Several phrases like 'real job' with 'real wage' in mainstream job markets were mentioned by some researchers (Wilson, 2003; Beyer et al, 2003; Pannell & Simons, 2000) for mainstream employment. Barnes and Roulstone (2005:) argue that a phrase such as 'paid employment' fails to address 'the stigma associated with unemployment and the social and psychological consequences for those excluded from the workplace' (p. 322). Meaningful work meant more than just 'paid employment'. It

included 'the everyday tasks that non-disabled people take for granted such as getting out of bed, washing, dressing and so on' (p. 323). Hence,

'The meaningful work is work that is freely entered into, that allows the worker to exercise her autonomy and independence, that enables the worker to develop her rational capacities, that provides a wage sufficient for physical welfare, that supports the moral development of employees and that is not paternalistic in the sense of interfering with the worker's conception of how she wishes to obtain happiness' (Bowie, 1998: 1087)

Based on the six characteristics of meaningful work in the above quotation I argue that meaningful work does not only mean 'paid employment'. It means developing people with learning difficulties' self-respect, their independence from social security benefit, freedom, empowerment and choice on the work and, satisfaction of their lives. I argue that the meaning of meaningful work in many respects is the same as normalisation. Normalisation is enabling people with learning difficulties to lead more 'normal' lives by integrating them as far as possible into the mainstream, to enjoy their lives (Nirje, 1994).

Normalisation means a normal rhythm of day...a normal routine of life...to experience the normal rhythm of the year, with holidays and family days of personal significance...an opportunity to undergo normal developmental experience of the life cycle...the choices, wishes and desires of the mentally retarded themselves have to be taken into consideration as nearly as possible, and respected...facilities should provide for male and female...integration of retarded boys and girls into society...a prerequisite to letting the retarded obtain an existence as close to normal as possible is to apply normal economic standards...the standards of the physical facilities, e.g. hospitals, schools, group homes and hostels, and boarding homes, should be the same as those regularly applied in society to the same kind of facilities for ordinary citizens (Nirje, 1994: 19).

The normalisation principle has emerged as a powerful tool in the design and development of services for people with learning difficulties (Chappell, 1992, Wilson, 2003). The philosophy and practice of normalisation stressed the aim of assisting individuals into 'socially valued life conditions and socially valued roles' (Wolfensberger and Thomas, 1983: 24). The transition of people with learning difficulties from the large institutions into small-scale units and supporting them to participate in the community was the aim of normalisation (Russell, 1998). Did it come through?

In the UK, the reality shows that many people with learning difficulties moved from large institutions into small houses and are living in the community but are excluded from equal participation in society because, day centres and small group ‘homes’ or hostels ‘in the community’ still demonstrate an ‘institutional’ impression (Barnes, 1990), focusing on helping individuals cope with their personal tragedy (Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 38). Moving people with learning difficulties into small homes with the same atmosphere as the institutions where they previously lived without changing the ideology means that people with learning difficulties are still regarded as being ‘sub-human’ (Wolfensberger, 1972), and of less value; therefore, they cannot be normalised. Regarding employment, the aim of the theory of normalisation is to support people with learning difficulties to get ‘meaningful work’. I argue that for implementing the theory of normalisation gaining meaningful work is essential. The meaning of meaningful work must include earning money, increasing self-esteem, self-respect, freedom, empowerment, choice on the work, enjoyment and satisfaction with their lives. Does it come through? In this research most people were excluded from ‘meaningful work’. While the supported employment programme (SEP) was a main part of the British government’s support for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties ‘wanting to enter or re-enter employment’ (Beyer et al, 2003: 2), *was it successful in helping people get meaningful work’?*

To what extent do supported employment programmes promote the opportunity for people with learning difficulties to access ‘meaningful work’?

This study showed that supported employment programme had many benefits for participating employers. It increased awareness of the ability of people with learning difficulties; supported employers in solving problems inside and outside of work; and; provided financial support. But in terms of enabling people to obtain ‘meaningful work’ the SEP was not successful.

All SEPs stated that they provided information to the employers through training and face to face meetings. This affected employers’ awareness and positively changed their attitudes towards people with learning difficulties. Hence:

I think one of the first things we would have to try and do is try and educate a lot of employers about the abilities...to focus on the abilities of these people, of people with learning disabilities rather than look on the negative side of it and like I say I think we'd have to establish some fairly wide ranging training establishments whereby we could move people in and out of...we go in the workplace and not only talk to the managers but if the managers are interested we will also go in and talk to the workforce and we will talk to the people who are actually going to work with the people and give them some ideas of disability awareness.

(Fabian)

It was also observed that support workers from the SEPs increased the employers' awareness of the ability of employees with learning difficulties by providing them with information. For example, once Fabian who was a support worker from Far House, was observed. He had a meeting with the manager of the supermarket and gave him some information about the capability of people with learning difficulties. Then, Fabian referred two adults with learning difficulties to do voluntary work and the manager accepted them for three months. Fabian said that he has had many such successful meetings. This study showed that the supported employment service was successful in increasing the employers' awareness of the ability of people with learning difficulties.

All employers who employed people with learning difficulties through SEPs stated that they were interested in employing people with learning difficulties who were referred by the SEPs because they knew they would have adequate support from the SEPs when they needed it. About the frequency and accessibility of support for employers, Fabian, a support worker of Far House explained:

If the manager has any problems with workers with learning difficulties then we sit down and we talk about it and we try and solve them...what we say to them is that we are only a phone call away. We can get anywhere in the city within 20 - 30 minutes and if it is a problem that's that serious we will go straight away, as soon as we get the phone call we will go.

Why are employers interested in employing people with learning difficulties who were referred by the SEPs to work? Perhaps, because they can enjoy working with employees with learning difficulties as volunteers for many years and also they can benefit from various free support from the SEPs at any time when difficulties may arise. For example,

We usually arrange a meeting, so we will go and talk to the employer and find out what the problem is and then we will encourage them to have a meeting in the workplace with the employee and a representative from Rambert Employment and talk through what the problem is and try and

resolve it before it becomes a big problem (Maria, a support worker and the manager of Rambert).

It was also observed that most employees with learning difficulties had received supervision by the support workers at work. For example, once I went to see David, who was working in a supermarket. I heard that he had had an incident with his manager at work. David's problem was solved with the help of his support worker and he continued in the job without facing any more problems. David's support worker explained the incident.

David had some misunderstanding about his job...it wasn't a big problem. David's job is stacking the freezers, bringing all the frozen food in and stacking the different cabinets up and that was his job but on this particular day a supervisor walked past and somebody, I don't know who, had left some bottles of pop at the side of the freezer cabinet right. So his supervisor asked him, 'would you just move me these please'...he said...'No, that's not my job, I stack freezers'...he was exactly right but the supervisor became upset...and it caused a little bit of friction but we had to go down and we just had to explain to those people, to the managers...'well he doesn't understand, he's got a job stacking freezers and that's all he will do, if somebody puts something at the end of that cabinet, if it's not frozen food it's not part of his job and he won't do it'. The supervisor didn't realise that people were like that...then we explained to David, 'Sometimes a supervisor will come past and ask you to do something because you are the closest person there and when they ask you to please do it'. He said, 'Oh...so it is alright for me to do that and leave the freezers...yes if a supervisor asks you to do it, it is okay for you to do that'. In the end the problem was solved.

(Fabian)

In the above incident, if David had not had adequate support from his support worker, he could have lost his job.

Consistency of support for people is very important to enable them to hold down their jobs. This study showed that all SEPs continued supporting people in settling in and maintaining their jobs. However, the supported employment which was offered by SEPs was not long-term and was limited through funding barriers. This study supports the findings of the AFSE (2000), Simons & Watson (1999) and Wilson (2003) studies which highlighted that lack of funding was one of the significant factors which prevented supported employment agencies from developing their services and support for people with learning difficulties.

In this study, all SEPs stated that finding jobs and placements were important services that they provided for people with learning difficulties. Once when observing Sheila Davies in the Rambert Café I met Alison who was a support worker of the

Rambert. She had a meeting with the manager of the café about George, an employee with a learning difficulty, whom she had recommended. She wanted to know what was going on with George in his new placement. Alison mentioned that one of her responsibilities was finding suitable jobs and placements. Alison stated:

At first I get to learn to know them and find out what they want to do. We have to build up an element of trust as well and then we go through the papers and the Job Centre together. If they are looking for voluntary work we'll look through the volunteer bulletin and we'll look at jobs that might be suitable for them....When somebody is going into work or a work experience placement somewhere then we've always spoken to the employer first and made sure that the employer has met them and had a good briefing from us how to work with them. So by the time somebody starts work the employer has already accepted them and has a good understanding of their needs. I think if we met an employer and they didn't have a good understanding of what the people would need and we didn't think they'd support them well then we would not consider a placement there at all.

(Alison)

After referring people with learning difficulties into work, all SEPs said that they helped people in settling in their job and placements. Hence:

When the person starts the job we offer approximately 10 working days, so if the person is working full-time that would be the first sort of 2 weeks of employment the support worker would be there with them all the time if necessary, or if the person's coping well with the job then they would sort of gradually withdraw the support, but they keep on monitoring it. So, we'll visit to start with may be once a week and then gradually a little bit less, so we will monitor sort of every 3 months we will make sure that we have contact with the employer and the person...Yes, everybody that we work with, even if they are employed full-time and it is paid, the support worker will still just monitor. Hence to start with it will be every 3 months, then may be every 6 months, if they have been employed for 2 years and there hasn't been any problems then were just sort of there in the case the person needs us, or in case the employer needs us. They might phone once every six months just to say is everything all right, but we are there in an emergency.

(Maria)

This study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2003, 2004), Wilson (2003), Shearn and Jones (2002), Pannell and Simons (2000) studies which noted that supported employment is enabling people with learning difficulties to find and hold down jobs in open employment. However, the contemporary nature of the employment of the 200

employees with learning difficulties in Chapter Seven showed that most employees who were referred to work by the SEPs were unpaid and had very low wages. They were also excluded from participation in society and from having social relationships with their non-disabled colleagues. Most of them still depended on the social security benefits and had no freedom, power and choice of work. Is the supported employment programme, therefore, successful? This study showed that generally, the SEPs through supported employment agencies had offered a lot of services to the employers and employees with learning difficulties. They were successful in increasing the employers' awareness of the ability of people with learning difficulties and also in finding jobs and workplaces for them. However, the SEP was not successful in enabling people to gain 'meaningful work' in mainstream employment.

This was perhaps because four supported employment agencies which assisted people with learning difficulties in getting jobs, contributed to the poor quality of employment for this group. In enabling people with learning difficulties to gain 'meaningful work' supported employment providers need to be able to put the ideal of supported employment into practice. Supported employment providers need 'to ensure that both the employee and employer receive 'just enough' creative assistance, information and back-up to achieve success, with this support continuing as long as it is needed' (O'Bryan et al cited in Schneider and Wistow, 2004: 11). In this regard, there is a possibility that supported employment providers did not offer the ideal supported employment services to people with learning difficulties and their employers. If the SEPs offered a good quality of the supported employment services to people with learning difficulties and their employers, employees with learning difficulties would be able to gain 'meaningful work'. So, it is possible that the SEPs did not practice well and that they contributed to the poor quality of employment rather than enabling people with learning difficulties to gain 'meaningful work'.

While collecting data, I observed that most SEPs made a concerted effort in supporting people with learning difficulties to get jobs, but some did not. I realised that there were some differences between the SEPs when offering support to the employees with learning difficulties. For example, regarding the on-the job supervision of employees with learning difficulties, one of the SEPs did not care much about the informants and did not respond adequate to the needs of the employers and employees who needed help or advice. In this regard, I suggest further research to explore how supported

employment providers themselves, contribute to the poor quality of employment rather than enabling people to gain 'meaningful work'. I will next consider barriers from the supported employment providers' point of view.

Barriers to obtaining meaningful work: the views and experiences of SEPs

Well, there is a misconception around that people with learning disabilities are all some sort of mad axe man, they are going to come round and start stabbing people and fighting and shouting and screaming but that's not the case.

(Fabian)

In this study, SEPs suggested various structural and individual barriers to employing people with learning difficulties.

Structural barriers

Structural barriers include negative attitudes of employers, parents, carers, and service providers; inflexibility of the benefit system; unenforced legislation; difficulties in using public transport, and; a lack of long-term employment service support.

Negative attitudes of employers: All SEPs stated that the negative attitude of employers towards people with learning difficulties was one of the main barriers. Thus:

On the whole, employers, if you speak to them can be quite reluctant as soon as you mention learning disability...lots of employers do put up barriers and aren't willing to take people on because of the learning disability and because of their lack of understanding and inability to cope. Sometimes the employers might say that it is not the right environment for them...the person with the learning disability would perhaps not be made to feel welcome and they would have undue pressure put on them and if they are not supported in the right way then they would get upset, and, therefore, we are setting them up to fail really.

(Alison)

This study supports the findings of the Sapey (2004), Beyer et al (1999, 2004), Heenan (2002) and (Roulstone, 2004) studies which highlighted that the negative attitudes of

employers towards disabled people, particularly people with learning difficulties was the main barrier to their employment. Why are the attitudes of employers towards people with learning difficulties negative? All SEPs stated that this was usually because the employers' awareness of the ability of people with learning difficulties was very low, and because they had little or no experience of working with them.

I think there are some negative attitudes and some stereo type assumptions, but I think a lot of the times it's because the employers have not been educated about it...quite often, they have a positive attitude if they have employed someone with a disability before.

(Maria)

This study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2004), Gosling and Cotterill (2000) which noted that the negative attitude of employers was because many of them had little or no experience working with people with learning difficulties. Therefore, we need to provide some work experience for employers to encourage them to 'improve their attitudes towards disabled people and their understanding of what it means to employ a disabled person as PMSU (2005: 132) suggested.

The negative attitudes of parents and carers: This study showed that parental and carers' concern was a key barrier to employing people with learning difficulties. Most SEPs stated that many people with learning difficulties were prevented by their parents and carers from fully participating in the labour market.

Parental concerns are often a substantial barrier to people getting into work. I know over the years, we found it in quite a few occasions where parents are unwilling to let their children go to work.

(Peter)

This study supports the findings of Beyer et al (2004: 59) which argued that the reluctance of some carers to support employment for people with learning difficulties is a major employment barrier. Why do most parents and carers try to prevent their children with learning difficulties from gaining paid employment? The SEPs noted four major reasons as outlined below:

Low expectations

There are some parents who would never allow their children [to work]. They would instinctively say no, she or he is not capable of doing it, and we don't want them going out.

(Fabian)

Their parents and carers don't think they can do much in the way of a job.

(Mike, a support worker and the founder of Spring Agency)

Fear of losing state benefits

Parents in particular have a fear of losing benefits, because quite often they have had to fight quite hard to get those benefits in the first place. The rules are not very flexible. People tend to take the safer option and that is to have a voluntary job and keep getting the benefits. It is seen as a risk...I think a lot of people that we meet do want a full-time job but they recognise that it will affect their benefits and to be honest I think it is more often the carers, or family members and carers that are concerned about the benefits issues because quite often they have to fight quite hard to get the right benefits for their son and daughter that they are entitled to.

(Maria)

This study supports the findings of Beyer et al (2004) which argued that the 'families discouraged people with learning disabilities from going to work, particularly if households were dependent on income from benefits' (p. 73).

Security and safety worries

Parents and carers don't want their son or daughter who they still see as being childish or a child, to go out in the big bad world where they feel they might be at risk or vulnerable. They might be bullied, they might have been bullied in school anyway but they don't want them to be put at risk and it's a great leap of faith for parents and carers to allow their offspring to take up employment and this we find all the time...There are so many people here who ought to be in employment and who should have been employed many years ago but the parents didn't want them to go down that route. They felt that they were too vulnerable to be allowed out into another organisation that couldn't monitor them as well as we monitor them without supervision

(Heather, the manager of Far House SEA)

This study supports the findings of Beyer et al (2004) which noted that parents' and carers' reluctance is largely because they are concerned about the ability of the person with a learning disability to cope or to avoid harm.

Low esteem

The parents might say that they don't want them to be doing a low esteem job. Some parents, for example, have said to me that they don't want their child, even though they are an adult they are still their child, just to be washing up, they want them to be a chef. For example, we found a job where a person with learning difficulties could do the washing up but his

parents said that it wasn't suitable and they wanted their son to be a chef and they weren't having them doing the washing up...but we all start at the bottom of the rung. If I wanted to be a chef I'd have to start off in the kitchen doing the washing up and the preparation.

(Alison)

The parents' and carers' concern raised two important issues which need to be investigated: inflexibility of the benefit system (see below) and a lack of autonomy of people with learning difficulties in going to work and choosing placements.

When we have reviews on our people here we always talk about employment and parents always say no, I don't want them employed, I don't want them to get a job, we can't afford the benefit loss, and another thing, the benefits are usually a family source of income it's not just about the individual learning disabled person, the benefit helps the family out to a great extent and the family can't afford to lose that benefit so that's another benefit trap.

(Heather, the manager of Far House)

Personal autonomy is an important adult status (Griffiths cited in Lawson, 2003: 118). However, this study indicated that people with learning difficulties had less choice than non-disabled people in their everyday lives and most of the times, parents, carers, and other people made decisions on their behalf.

The negative attitudes of service providers: This study showed that the attitude of some service providers was negative.

The professional social workers and people who work with people with learning disabilities at the day centres don't believe they can do much in the way of a job (Mike).

The DRC (2004: paragraph 11.9) stated that 'It is unlawful for service providers to victimise people whether disabled or non-disabled'. However, two out of the eight service providers suggested that some other service providers had negative attitudes concerning the working abilities of people with learning difficulties. In this regard, I suggest further research on the effect of attitudes of service providers on the employment of people with learning difficulties.

Unenforcement of employment policy and legislation: This study showed that unenforcement of employment policy was one of the major employment barriers. Most SEPs stated that some employers discriminated against people with learning difficulties.

Some employers are very discriminatory against people with leaning disabilities and we have had occasion to take to task one or two employers because they won't employ disabled people and it is not very pleasant...and it spoils things if we do need to go back to that company in the future...well we won't go back, we don't go back and we just have to accept the fact that they are not going to employ people with learning disabilities and we have to work in other ways to try and change that.

(Fabian)

According to the DRC (2004) employers need to carry out their duties under the law to avoid the risk of legal action being taken against them. However, this study indicated that despite discriminating against people with learning difficulties, there was usually no legal action against employers.

I think one of the biggest problems is the fact that employers have such a big choice in the labour market...there are so many people unemployed and there are so many people who are better qualified than disabled people. They just naturally settle to the bottom of the pile. In this circumstance, the government need to enforce the legislation. I don't think there is enough done. I think there isn't problem with the legislation...there is a problem with perhaps enforcing it.

(Fabian)

Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Pannell and Simons (2000), Doyle (1995), and Riddell et al (2002) studies which noted that there was not enough power to implement the policy and to force employers to implement the legislation.

Inflexibility of the benefit system: In this study, all SEPs stated that one of the major employment barriers was the inflexibility of the benefit system. They stated that the current benefit system does not let people who claim benefits have paid employment and earn more than £20 without losing benefit, thus supporting the findings of Beyer et al (2004:2).

The majority are working part time. People usually just want to work for 4 hours due to their benefits...There is definitely a fear about losing benefits and quite often we have placed a lot of people in jobs where they are only doing 4 hours a week for that reason. So they only earn £20 which doesn't affect their benefits, but a lot of that is more to do if they are living in supported accommodation for example, the rules make it very, very difficult for that person to work more than 4 hours.

(Maria)

Difficulties in using public transport: One of the factors preventing people with learning difficulties from getting and keeping a job was the difficulties that they had in using public transport.

It is easy to say people want a job and that they are capable of doing a job but if they can't travel to the job the chances of them keeping that job is very difficult.

(Alison)

The SEPs highlighted that people with learning difficulties had difficulty in using transport and suggested that providing any type of travel training was essential. This study supports the findings of the Beyer et al, (2004), Wilson (2003), Reid and Bray (1998) studies which noted that transport problems were barriers to work for people with learning difficulties. It is worth noting that two of the eight SEPs suggested that some parents and carers prevented them from attending any bus training.

Before they go out on a work placement one of the things that they must be able to do is travel independently... it's a long standing problem that we have and once again it is down to parents and carers and they won't allow any form of bus training or independent travel training. They won't allow it.

(Fabian)

Perhaps, this was because of their concerns about the ability of their children to avoid harm as Beyer et al (2004) argues. Further research needs to be done to determine the reason why parents did not let their children to attend the transport training.

A lack of long-term supported employment services: This study showed that most SEPs stated that those with learning difficulties were excluded from paid employment because long-term employment support limited through lack of funding.

We can't provide long term support, some people might be very good in a job but they might need support forever with the social issues and we are not in a position to provide that, because we haven't got the funding for it...I just think there needs to be more support in the same way we provide it but we need more funding to provide more long term support as well.

(Alison)

Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2003 and 2004) study which highlighted that a lack of consistency of suitable supported employment through a funding problem was a barrier to employment. The PMSU (2005) recommends that

‘from 2006, DWP should increase the flexibility of budgets within its current SEP away from programmes which fail to integrate disabled people in mainstream employment into programmes which assist disabled people progress towards open employment; provide value for money; and fulfil the wider objective of social inclusion for all disabled people’ (p. 159).

Individual barriers

This study revealed some major individual barriers including: unwillingness to work, a lack of confidence, having difficulty in communication with managers, colleagues and customers at work, a lack of qualifications, and limited social skills.

Unwillingness to work: This study showed that some people with learning difficulties were unemployed because they did not want to work.

Some people really do not want to work. They do not see employment as something they want to achieve. So the barriers are simply the fact, they do not want to go to work or they do not feel that the work would be of value to them.

(Peter)

This study supports the findings of Burchardt (2000) and Martin (cited in Roulstone, 2003) that some disabled people were unemployed because they did not want to work. Why do some people with learning difficulties not want to work? Is it because of their individual impairments or is it related to the family atmosphere? Perhaps, it is because of their negative self-perceptions and their feeling that they were unable to do the job. They might simply be lazy. There are lots of people who do not have learning difficulties who simply do not like work. I suggest further research about those people with learning difficulties who do not want to work.

A lack of confidence: In line with the findings of Woodward et al (2003) and Beyer et al (2004), this study showed that some people with learning difficulties did not get employment because they did not have enough confidence in their ability to work. For example, Mike, a support worker and the founder of Spring SEA argued that ‘One of the barriers is that these people themselves don’t think they can do much in the way of a job’.

Confidence is a key factor for everybody when it comes to getting a job. Why is confidence in people with learning difficulties low? Why do people with learning difficulties think that they are not able to do the job? The stories showed that exclusion from adequate education in childhood affected self-perception and confidence. Then, a lack of confidence affected their employment in adulthood.

A lack of understanding of the job: Baron et al (cited in Wilson, 2003: 102) noted that understanding basic tasks of the job was important in maintaining employment. This study showed that understanding the job's requirements was necessary for people with learning difficulties. According to Peter, the manager of MAP, "We need people who understand what the requirements are of having any job".

It is clear that understanding the job's requirements is essential for everyone. In this regard, vocational training is necessary for everybody, particularly those with learning difficulties. The stories in Chapter Six showed that the vocational training of the informants had not always been related to their current job, leading to difficulties. For example, for Sheila Davies who served customers in a café was supposed to be able to handle money and give change. Sheila had difficulties performing her duties successfully because she had not adequate education at school.

A lack of understanding of and in relationships with colleagues: This study showed that good relationships with colleagues were essential for the maintenance of jobs and placements. For example, Peter, the manager of MAP explained:

People who have got good personalities and...understanding the relationships with colleagues...can become part of a workforce, and can integrate into a workforce.

As the day services staff in Beyer et al's (2004: 53) study stated, people with learning difficulties need to get and to improve their 'personal, practical, cognitive and social skills, such as communication, and; understanding the norms of behaviour within the workforce' and community. This study showed that a lack of social skills or other relevant skills affected the employment of people with learning difficulties and they faced difficulties in keeping their jobs. For example, most SEPs stated that misunderstanding a joke and a lack of social skills was one of the employment barriers which created difficulties in the workplace. Hence:

Not being able to take a joke, not understanding their employer when they are told off, not understanding the breaks, not understanding what's

appropriate to say and what's not appropriate to say at work. They might talk very much about their personal lives not realising that that's not the sort of thing that you discuss at work so they might need one to one support for a long time even though they are capable of doing the actual job itself then the things they say and their behaviours might be inappropriate.

(Alison)

In this study, the experiences of all SEPs highlighted that providing social skills training was very important. Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2004) study which noted that people with learning difficulties need to get suitable personal, practical, cognitive and social skills to become employed.

A lack of qualifications: This study showed that in old manufacturing jobs qualifications were not essential although they are extremely important in gaining jobs in the 21st Century.

The old manufacturing jobs that Northern town used to have in large numbers where people did not need to be literate or numerate or possess certain skills. Many times they could push a brush or manage a machine, simple skills. All this has largely been wiped out now and we are finding that many of the people that we're dealing with can't access the new forms of employment that demands some certain skills.

(George, a support worker of Spring Agency)

Most SEPs argued that a lack of qualification was one of the employment barriers. They stated that this did not mean that people with learning difficulties were unable to gain qualifications. However, unsuitable provision at school/college often meant that their learning/training needs were not met.

Most jobs which people with learning difficulties doing are catering terms, they are cleaning jobs and that sort of thing. For one they don't need specific qualifications which is one of the problems obviously that we have because they have learning disabilities but it doesn't mean that they can't get qualifications, they can...For example, all the people that we place in catering type establishments, all have the basic food handling and food hygiene certificate.

(Fabian)

Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Tomlinson (1996), Woodward et al (2003), Beyer et al (2003), PMSU (2005) and Barnes et al (1998) studies which noted that low qualifications for disabled people would reduce the chance of them being in employment.

This study also highlighted SEPs assumptions of the reasons for adults with learning difficulties leaving jobs. Most SEPs stated that most employees with learning difficulties left or lost their jobs because of these reasons: finishing temporary job contracts, closing down of the company, being in a placement far away from home, bullying by customers at work, redundancy, misunderstanding a joke at work, disagreement and fighting with colleagues, deciding not to work, and disinterest in doing a certain job. For example, Fabian told the story of a person who was removed from his work because of misunderstanding a joke at work.

One person who we had been working with had walked past and seen him on this department and they said...oh traitor, you've left us...you know...don't you want to work with us any more and it upset the person because he thought he'd done something wrong in the sense that he'd left that group...it was meant as a joke but the guy on the placement was very upset about it, it really upset him...there was no intention to cause any problems but it did ...he was not able to distinguish when something was a joke or whether it's serious...well it finally happened that we had to remove this guy from that placement and we are now looking for other places for him to go but we established that we work with him and we'll talk to him and we'll tell him about different people and the different way they talk to each other and fingers crossed we will get him another placement fairly soon.

Some of the reasons were out of the control of the people who lost their jobs: redundancy, closing down the company, being in a placement far away from home, and reaching the end of a temporary contract. For example, Peter told the story of a person with learning difficulties who lost his job several times between 1983 and 1999 because the company closed down.

When he lost his job and I first placed this man in 1983 into a job and the company was taken over by another company and closed down and I found him another job in 1988 and then the second company was also taken over and it was in 1993 and I found him another job and he worked there until 1998 and that company went bankrupt and he was out of work about 6 month and the other company bought the old companies, opened up again, we approached them and got him employed there in 1999 and he worked there for a few years.

Bullying by employers was also reported by Beyer et al (2004: 1). The current study indicated bullying employees with learning difficulties by customers and non-disabled colleagues. Most SEPs stated that people with learning difficulties had some difficulties in their jobs including: bullying by non-disabled colleagues, disagreements with non-disabled colleagues, difficulties in communicating with employers, misunderstanding

jokes, making mistakes in the work; and some difficulties outside of work including difficulty with the neighbours, and difficulty in using transport. These difficulties affected their job.

We have a married couple...the husband works and the wife currently does not work...They had some problems with neighbours, which have become a little bit threatening at that time. They wanted to take this to the police, so we accompanied them to the police station to act as sort of an advocate for them...the end result was that the policeman visited their neighbours, and had a little discussion with them. The neighbour has now moved so currently there is not a problem...we had to provide that support because if we didn't then they would get upset and that would have an effect on the husband's job.

(Peter)

How can people with learning difficulties overcome employment barriers and obtain 'meaningful work'? The views of SEPs will be considered in the following section.

Ways of overcoming employment barriers: the views of the SEPs

This study suggested some ways of overcoming structural barriers including: changing the negative attitudes of employers, parents, carers and service providers towards people with learning difficulties. It also highlighted some ways of overcoming individual barriers included increasing self-confidence and providing suitable training for people with learning difficulties.

Ways of overcoming structural barriers

The SEPs suggested five methods for changing the employers' attitudes:

1. Offering one to one support to employers. Hence:

We went to see somebody recently at a supermarket and on the phone they were reluctant about taking somebody on, and then when Maria mentioned one to one support, they were very keen, by the time we came out from having a meeting with them they were extremely keen to take on a lady that I had in mind for a position.

(Allison)

2. Direct experience with employees with learning difficulties

I think the more people with learning difficulties that go into employment and demonstrate that they can hold down a job and they can contribute in

the same way that other people do, I think those attitudes will change gradually over time anyway it perhaps needs to be a bit more proactive.

(Maria)

3. Increasing employers' awareness of the abilities of people with learning difficulties

Employers tend to think, 'oh no, we won't be able to cope with them and they won't be capable of doing the job'. It needs time to explain to the employer. Once we've got people in a placement and they're working with an employer, we find that the employers are very, very good and very supportive and willing to help as much as possible. I think it's a matter of explaining who we've got working and selling a person, rather than you don't sell the fact that they've got a learning disability, you sell the person and the skills they've got and that way is the way to get them the job.

(Alison)

4. Giving some positive messages to the employers about the level of skills of people with learning difficulties. Thus:

What we normally do is just talk about the people that we have on our books...we emphasise the skills and abilities, we don't talk very much about their disability, because our philosophy as an agency is that we are there to sell the persons skills, we are not there to sell their disability. So, we tend to really put across a positive message about what the people can do rather than the problems if you like, or difficulties, but we will just give a general explanation that if someone has a learning difficulty it usually means that they may take longer to learn the job, but that doesn't mean that they can't retain the information, so once they've learnt the job they will be able to perform it to the same standard as other people, they just perhaps need a longer period of time to absorb the information.

(Maria)

5. Employing people with learning difficulties in some service organisations like social services could change the attitudes of other employers to employing them in their organisations, hence:

We need to do a lot of disability awareness with employers and I suppose with our own organisations, like social services, national health, civil service. We need to do a lot of work with those organisations to start employing people with a disability to set an example to other employers who then, hopefully, would see it as a natural option rather than something that they have been specially asked to do...We do more work with employers to increase their awareness...simply by knocking on doors and talking to employers, talking about....not just about the group of people that we have here, talking about disability generally and why it would be so helpful to somebody with a disability to work alongside their staff or be one of their staff because I suppose a lot of employers don't have the time to even think about things like that. Unless they have experience of people with disability in their own family or in families of friends, I can't imagine somebody with a disability or disability issues coming to their term of reference very often, so...yes we need to do more work with employers.

(Heather)

Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2004), Roulstone et al (2003), and Aston et al (2005) which noted that changing negative attitudes through disability awareness was one of the important ways of overcoming barriers.

All SEPs stated that the attitudes of parents and carers were often negative due to low awareness of the ability of their children. Heather, the manager of Far House suggested that showing some examples of people working successfully to parents and carers would be very helpful:

One of the solutions is to show parents examples of people that are in work, that have been, for example, through Far House and that are working now. If parents would just go and visit these people or accept that it can happen...yes, if parents and carers could just look at the people that we have in employment and take an example from that and, you know, allay their fears a little bit about their own people.

In addition, all SEPs stated that *the current legislation needed to be reinforced*.

I think the Disability Discrimination Act probably needs to go further. I think the Disability Discrimination Act is the only piece of legislation really, which promotes employment of people with learning disabilities as disabled people. It doesn't really go far enough. It doesn't have the same power really as say the Race Discrimination or Sex Discrimination Act, it is becoming more powerful I think but with the Disability Rights Commission, since that was set up I think it is becoming more effective, but there still needs to be more done really on that. I think some employers think they are doing somebody a favour really, whereas actually they are gaining a good employee (Maria).

Most SEPs suggested that *flexibility in the benefit system would enhance the opportunities for most people with learning difficulties to get employment* while claiming benefit. For example, Fabian , a support worker stated:

One of the biggest difficulties we have is the benefit system... most of the people at the moment who are in Far House are on multiple benefits, they may be on disability allowance, they may be on severe living allowance and housing benefits and several benefits altogether which adds up to quite a sum...if these people turn into full-time employment their benefits would stop once they went to work or a large proportion of the benefit would stop so we have to balance it out...they would be allowed to take on a job ...without affecting any other benefits

This study supports the findings of the other research that changing the benefit system and offering more support to people with learning difficulties help them to move from welfare to wages. Further, on changing the benefit system, some SEPs suggested that

increasing the level of the minimum wage would encourage people to get jobs rather than stay at home on benefit.

The government has got to raise the minimum wage because most of our people will only, initially, earn the minimum wage because of their skill level and if they raised that then it would be more favourable for them to get a job rather than stay at home on benefit.

(Heather)

It is worth noting that the level of the national minimum wage was increased by the government from 1st October 2004²⁴

This study showed that all SEPs suggested *providing long term support* through supported employment agencies is a way of enabling people with learning difficulties to get 'meaningful work'.

What is the solution? This study showed that Workstep might be the way of enabling people with learning difficulties to get meaningful work. Out of the 200 employees with learning difficulties whose case files were reviewed, 26 had been referred by MAP, a private supported employment agency which had a Workstep programme contract and was responsible for implementing the Workstep Programme (explored in Chapter Three). The employment circumstances of this group was significantly better than those of other employees who were referred by the other supported employment agencies who did not implement the Workstep programme. Out of the 26 employees, all people had paid employment and their hourly wages were the minimum wage and over. All employees worked in non-segregated placements and most of them had a long period of service with their current employers. For example, the period of services of 88% of the 26 employees was more than five years. Regarding full/part-time division, according to the employers, 88% worked full-time and based on the Jobcentre definition, all of them worked full-time. Ninety two percent of the 26 employees worked weekly between 32 and 39 hours and all of them were paid. All the 26 informants received Community Taxes Benefit (CTB) and three of them received further benefit (Disability Living Allowance) as well. As a result of the employment circumstances of 26 people from MAP Workstep, I will argue that the Workstep is an important programme that could be used to implement the theory of normalisation and might be a successful programme leading to meaningful work. In fact, all the 26 employees had a paid job, but there was not a clear picture about the actual quality of their lives. In this regard, this research

²⁴ For further information related to the national minimum wage visit the following website: <http://www.is4profit.com/busadvice/nationalminimumwage/index.htm>

suggests an in-depth study of the effect of the Workstep on the employment and the quality of lives of people with learning difficulties.

Ways of overcoming individual barriers

Most SEPs in this study suggested *increasing self-confidence, esteem, and the autonomy* of people with learning difficulties by giving them more chances to speak up for themselves through self-advocacy groups as ways of overcoming barriers. They argued that if people with learning difficulties could speak up for themselves, they would oppose their parents and carers, and might make more decisions about their jobs and placements. For example, Suzy, a support worker of Rmabert agency who also helps people with learning difficulties in a self-advocacy group stated:

One of the things [ways] we found with people if we've done some work on confidence and speaking up for themselves is that they'll then go home and speak up for themselves and then the parents are really shocked because this person has answered back and they've been compliant for so long that they find that quite difficult and we do have to do work with the parents alongside work with the clients to enable them to deal with all of that. I think for a long time people with learning disabilities have just said yes to everything and when they start to say no or we want more or we want our rights then people get quite frightened.

Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Goodley (2000) study that self-advocacy would impact positively on the employment of many people with learning difficulties. I will argue that increasing the number of self-advocacy groups and encouraging people with learning difficulties to join, is one of the main ways of them overcoming employment barriers.

Providing adequate training: This study showed that most SEPs emphasised that providing suitable training could help to increase the self-confidence of people with learning difficulties. This was definitely the view of George, a support worker and job trainer. Peter, a support worker and the manager of MAP also mentioned the need for training in 'peripheral skills'.

I think you need to train people in peripheral skills, which is working safely, wearing appropriate clothing, understanding the hierarchy of work, understanding the relationships with colleagues.

Therefore, this study supports the findings of the Kitchen et al (1998), and Bass & Drewett (1996) studies which noted that people with learning difficulties, in order to

become employed, need adequate training to improve their ‘personal, social, practical, and cognitive skills (Beyer et al, 2004: 53).

Conclusion

I think it is society that puts the barriers up and it's society that needs to change in order to accept people with a disability, or accept people that are different, whether they've got a disability or not they should accept them and if they have the skills to do a job then they should be given equal opportunities to apply for those jobs and get the jobs... Positive discrimination to get people with a disability into employment that would be probably a better step, a better way of doing it for a few years until people got their heads round the idea of people with a disability in the work place.

(Heather, the manager of Far House)

Finally, I now reflect for the last time on how the four category analytic approach can be used to understand the data presented in this chapter before moving on in Chapter 10 to a discussion of all the findings and the implications for the employment of people with learning difficulties in Iran. In this chapter, I investigated the question ‘How do supported employment providers promote ‘meaningful work’ opportunities for people with learning difficulties?’. I did this by employing a thematic analysis of the views and experiences of the eight supported employment providers (SEPs) provided in one-to-one interviews. The individual and ‘incompetency-based factors which affected the employment of people with learning difficulties (as indicated in position 1, ‘individual materialist’, Chapter Four) were considered by questioning the SEPs. The results show that there were some individual factors to employing people with learning difficulties including: unwillingness to work, a lack of confidence, having difficulty in communication with managers, colleagues and customers at work, a lack of qualifications, and limited social skills. Most SEPs argued that the reason for individual limitations was not related to the learning disabilities of people, but to cultural and structural barriers. The results of this study supported the individual-materialist in the way that individual impairment affected the employment of people with learning difficulties. However, in both this chapter and in the last it is clear that the perceptions of others NOT involved in supporting people with learning difficulties in employment were more negative and impairment-based in nature. For those involved such as employers and SEPs impairment-based limitations did not prevent access to work nor people with learning difficulties successfully fulfilling employment roles. There were a

number of practical mechanisms that might be put into place to address any limitations by virtue of 'impairment' and a lot of work required to change public prejudice against disabled workers. However, this study also determined that these types of personal limitations were often the consequence of structural barriers.

Position 2 of the analytic model, the individual-idealist position that focuses on cognitive interaction, highlighted the perception of all the SEPs that the ability of employees with learning difficulties was positive. The SEPs perceived them as capable, punctual, reliable, willing, hard-working very helpful and trustworthy workers. It also described 'meaningful work' as a job opportunity in mainstream employment that developed a person in all respects. This study also addressed how supported employment agencies affected the employment of people with learning difficulties. It argued that the current supported employment programme, despite supporting employees with learning difficulties at work and increasing the employers' awareness of their ability, was not successful in enabling people to gain meaningful work.

This study, also identified 'cultural barriers' (Position 3, the social constructionist position) to the employment of people with learning difficulties as well as those relating to the distribution of power within the organisations in which they worked (position 4, the social constructionist position). Therefore, the political, structural and physical barriers within society which prevent this group from gaining paid employment were considered by reviewing the experiences and perspectives of SEPs. This study showed some structural barriers to employing people with learning difficulties from the point of view of the SEPs. These included the negative attitudes of employers, parents, carers, and service providers; inflexibility of the benefit system; unenforced legislation around disability rights; difficulties in using public transport, and; a lack of long-term employment service support.

The findings point towards a number of ways in which employment services can be improved for people with learning difficulties in society: increasing disability awareness on the part of employers, parents and carers; the provision of suitable social and vocational training for people with learning difficulties; increasing adequate support at work for people with learning difficulties and employers; providing suitable employment opportunities in the job market and a flexible benefits system.

This research described some comparative benefits of the Workstep programme in helping people with learning difficulties to get a paid job. It also introduced the Workstep programme as an important normalisation programme. It suggested further

studies to determine the effect of the Workstep programme on the employment and the lives of people with learning difficulties.

CHAPTER TEN: From Northern town to Iran:

research findings and future directions

Introduction

When I arrived there, I saw their son with severe learning difficulties in chains in the yard. This visit was in summer, so it was warm and a lot of flies covered the face and body of the disabled child. I became angry and I asked his parents why they kept their son in chains; why they ill treated their child like that, and; why so many flies were covering his face and body. I also asked if they thought he was human. If so, why was he being kept like an animal? Unfortunately, the parents were completely misguided about their child. They said they believed that he was ‘stupid’ and ‘mad’ because he was 22 years old but he could not talk and he was unable to eat, learn, or care for himself. They also said that if they removed the chains, he would go outside and hurt himself and other people who lived in this area. I was puzzled by this incident because the Welfare Organisation gave SDA benefits to this family but never checked the quantity and quality of service for disabled children who were being cared for by their families at home.

Above I repeat a story related in Chapter 2 of this thesis to emphasise the importance of addressing the fourth research question: How can this study help to promote the employment of people with learning difficulties in Iran? This I do by discussing the findings of the first, second and the third research questions and making recommendations which could influence policy making, service provision and practice for people with learning in Iran.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Discussion of the research findings
- How the findings of this research might contribute to the promotion of the participation of people with learning difficulties in Iranian society?
- Hopes for the future: recommendations for change and research in England and Iran

Discussion of the research findings

As is mentioned in Chapter Two, ‘I come from Iran where most people with learning difficulties have the right to work. Despite the legislation, in Iranian society the dominant assumption is that such people are unable to work and as a result, they have

been denied their rights to mainstream employment. Based on my personal experiences and knowledge (described in Chapter Two), I believe that people with learning difficulties are able to work. However, they are marginalised from the world of work as a result of socio-political and cultural barriers within Iranian society; rather than because of their personal limitations. To overcome employment barriers we needed to challenge and change negative perceptions. In pursuit of this aim, I needed to identify adequate employment opportunities and also provide some real examples of success in order to support my argument. Consequently, I considered the existing literature (detailed in Chapter Three) on employment policies, programmes and services to get more information about the employment opportunities in the UK so that I could make recommendations to improve legislation, policies, service provision and practices in Iran.

As a researcher favouring the social model of disability, I made positive assumptions about the abilities of people with learning difficulties. In this regard, the social model of learning difficulties was introduced as the main epistemological stance of my research (explored in Chapter Four).

I employed an eclectic approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods (described in Chapter Five) to give the informants voice to share their experiences with others. Based on the epistemological stance of this research and a model of my research journey (explored in Chapter Four), in this research, I addressed four research questions (described in Chapter One). This research began by investigating the individual factors which affected the employment of people with learning difficulties as indicated in position 1, 'individual materialist' (see Chapter Four). The individual-materialist position focuses on individual factors and views people with learning difficulties as 'Incompetent Adults' (Goodley & Lawthom, 2005: 142). There is an assumption that people with learning difficulties are unemployed or work in very poor circumstances because of their individual impairment which portrays them as a group unable to work. The individual factors of people with learning difficulties in relation to work were considered by a survey questionnaires and interviews with employees with learning difficulties, employers and supported employment providers. This study highlighted some individual factors which prevent people from working. These include unwillingness to work, a lack of confidence, a lack of autonomy, difficulty communicating with managers, colleagues and customers at work, a lack of qualifications, and limited social skills. The results of this study supported the

individual-materialist position in the way that individual impairment affected the employment of people with learning difficulties.

However, this study determined that these types of personal limitations were often the consequence of both structural barriers and the perceptions of those who made assumptions about the relation between impairment and ability to undertake work. Structurally, educational level has a major impact on people's later lives and limitations of this type would apply to everybody whether disabled or non-disabled. Therefore, the findings of this research strongly reject the assumption that relegates people with learning difficulties to exclusion from mainstream society as a result of their 'individual impairment'.

From this position, the study immediately moved to position 2, the individual-idealist position that focuses on cognitive interaction and the affective experiences of the informants. Individual-idealism sees disability as the product of personal experience and the negation of social roles between individuals. Therefore, this research investigated the affective and attitudinal experiences of people with learning difficulties, employers and supported employment providers. The first research question 'What are the realities of work for people with learning difficulties in the current climate of the post-Valuing People White Paper?' was considered. In this regard, I studied the lives of six workers and considered the case files of a further 200 employees (explored in Chapter Seven). The stories told and revealed showed that work had different significance and meaning for the various informants. Work was seen as a way of developing self-confidence, a great opportunity to make friends, a tool of self-esteem, a pastime outside of homecare and, as a means of caring for people. Despite the British government emphasising that disabled people have the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens (PMSU, 2005: 49) and attempting to enable more of them to gain paid work in the labour market (DoH, 2001: 26), the contemporary nature of work for the sample in this research showed that their employment experiences and histories, particularly in the case of women were very poor. The results give a strong message that people with learning difficulties, particularly women are not accorded the full range of rights that other citizens are. Their employment was not stable and they frequently changed employers and workplaces. In fact, most informants had no autonomy to decide whether to retain or resign their jobs. It was the employers who decided whether to ask the informants to stay or to leave the work every few months or years. In this regard, most informants

were not satisfied with their jobs because they were unpaid and insecure. For example, Robert Savage stated, “I want a proper job with proper pay. I don’t want a different placement every couple of months that leads to nothing.” It is clear that changing employers and workplaces happens with disabled and non-disabled workers; with workers whether or not they have learning difficulties. However, in their case, there was a much greater frequency of changes.

This study demonstrated clearly that exclusion from paid employment is much more than a matter of wages in that participation in social life and the chance to make friends within a wide circle of people also tends to be restricted (Carr, 2004). This research also showed that the informants were all excluded from mainstream leisure activities. Most of them spent their leisure time alone, and there was practically no social interaction. Most leisure activities were passive and were organised by their families. In fact, most informants had no autonomy in selecting activities and organising their own leisure activities.

The White Paper (2001: 14) pointed out that ‘Valuing People is based on the premise that people with learning disabilities are people first’. Are they? Are they as valued as other citizens? One of the main British government’s objectives is to enable them ‘to have as much choice and control as possible over their lives through advocacy and a person-centred approach to planning the services and support they need’ (DoH, 2001: 44). This study showed that such adults were not counted as people first, because they were not valued as others in society are. I argue that ‘supporting and empowering disabled people to help themselves will improve their participation and inclusion in the community, in the labour market and in wider society’ (PMSU, 2005: 43). But how? The results of this study thus support the findings of other research that shows that people with learning difficulties are not counted as others in society; giving a strong message that membership in self-advocacy groups could be a good way for them to learn to live independently (PMSU, 2005) and also to enjoy social inclusion.

How are people with learning difficulties perceived by their employers in mainstream workplaces? As is mentioned in Chapter Three, the existing literature pointed to the negative attitudes of employers as a key barrier to employing people with learning difficulties. However, the results of this study seemed to show that employers perceived their employees with learning difficulties positively and were sympathetic to the idea of employing them. Employers in this sample argued that their employees were able to work and were very loyal, reliable, hard working and as efficient as their non-disabled

colleagues. Therefore, the findings of this research did not support those of Craig and Body (1990) and Kitchen et al (1998) studies which reported that employers perceived people with learning difficulties as unable to work. The findings of this study also highlighted the positive perceptions of supported employment providers. These providers perceived such people as capable, reliable, punctual, willing, hard-working, very helpful and trustworthy workers.

This thesis investigated how supported employment providers (SEPs) promote 'meaningful work' opportunities for people with learning difficulties. It indicated that the supported employment services which were offered by the Supported Employment Agencies (SEAs) affected the perceptions of employers about working with employees with learning difficulties. Most employers argued that SEPs had important benefits for them at work. SEPs increased employers' awareness of people; provided financial support for employers and; helped the employers solve potential problems at work. The benefits of the supported employment services were also emphasised by the SEPs in this research. Thus, this thesis supports the findings of the Beyer et al (2003), O'Bryan et al (2000), Bass and Brewett (1996) and Wilson (2003) studies which stated the benefit of the SEP for people. It argued that the current supported employment programme was not successful in enabling people with learning difficulties to gain meaningful work.

Based on the six characteristics that Bowie (1998) stated for meaningful work 'meaningful work is work that is freely entered into, that allows the worker to exercise her autonomy and independence, that enables the worker to develop her rational capacities, that provides a wage sufficient for physical welfare, that supports the moral development of employees and that is not paternalistic in the sense of interfering with the worker's conception of how she wishes to obtain happiness' (p. 1087). I argue that meaningful work does not only mean 'paid employment' (Barnes & Roulstone, 2005, Bowie, 1998). It means developing people's self-respect, their independence from social security benefit, freedom and choice on the work and, satisfaction of their lives. The findings of this study indicated that most employees who were referred to work by the SEPs were dissatisfied because they were unpaid or given very low wages. They also felt excluded from participation in society and from having social relationships with their non-disabled colleagues. Most of them were still dependent on the social security benefits and had no freedom, power or choice of work.

The Workstep programme was introduced by the British government in April 2001. It identified the needs of disabled people and offered adequate and appropriate support

(PMSU, 2005). This study also explored the role of the Workstep programme in supporting people with learning difficulties to gain meaningful work. If these employees are perceived by themselves, the employers and the SEPs as employees with many positive characteristics and if the aim of the supported employment programme is to assist people to gain meaningful work, why do most of them not get 'meaningful work'?

The study has been further enhanced by data interpretation using the third position outlined in the analytic model, the social creationist position, which views disability as a social construct-the idealist product of a society developing within a specific cultural context. In this research the cultural barriers to the employment of people with learning difficulties were considered by investigating the experiences and perspectives of people with learning difficulties, employers, and supported employment providers. In addition, from this position, the study was able to utilise position 4, the social constructionist position, in which disability 'can be regarded as the material relations of power arising from the development of political economy and/or patriarchy within a specific historical context. Therefore, the political, structural and physical barriers within society which prevent people with learning difficulties from gaining paid employment were considered by reviewing the experiences and perspectives of people with learning difficulties, employers and supported employment providers. This thesis highlighted a lot of structural and individual barriers to employing people with learning difficulties from the points of view of themselves, employers and SEPs. It showed structural barriers including negative attitudes of employers, parents, and service providers; inflexibility of the benefit system; unenforced legislation; difficulties in using public transport, and; a lack of long-term employment service support. A lack of employers' awareness of the abilities of people with learning difficulties and inflexibility of the benefit system were major barriers. This study also highlighted some individual factors which prevent people from working. These include unwillingness to work, a lack of confidence, a lack of autonomy, difficulty communicating with managers, colleagues and customers at work, a lack of qualifications, and limited social skills. However, it determined that these types of personal limitations were often the consequence of structural barriers. For example, educational level has a major impact on people's later lives. Secondly, these types of limitations would apply to everybody whether disabled or non-disabled. Therefore, the findings of this research strongly reject the assumption that relegates people with learning difficulties to exclusion from

mainstream society as a result of their 'individual impairment'. It determined that disabling barriers have 'a damaging effect on life chances and lead to many disabled people living in poverty, social exclusion and with low educational outcomes' (PMSU, 2005: 50). These findings were with regards to such people in the UK.

How the findings of this research might contribute to the promotion of the participation of people with learning difficulties in Iranian society?

It is clear that some of what I found out in this research can be adapted to Iran whereas some cannot. The literature discussed in Chapter Three showed *limited job opportunities* for people with learning difficulties in the UK. In this study, thirty nine different job titles were identified within the 200 case files analysed. Most informants worked in low skilled jobs as kitchen assistants, recycling assistants and shop assistants. A critical assessment of the employment circumstances of the informants in England is that these circumstances are poor. However, I want to consider these findings vis-à-vis Iranian society. In Iran, there are many job opportunities similar to those which exist in England in which people with learning difficulties can do well. However, the negative perception of their ability in Iran excluded them from mainstream employment.

Currently, most available job vacancies in Iran are filled by non-disabled employees who were unemployed for many years as a result of economical problems caused by the eight year Iran/Iraq war. In addition, those with learning difficulties are marginalised and denied their right to work because they are perceived 'as unable to work' (Walmsley, 1992: 222). In this regard, Iranian society needs to accept the fact that people with learning difficulties are able to work and society must 'not assume that people with learning disabilities cannot be valuable employees' as the Disability Rights Commissions (2004: 18, paragraph 2.4) suggested. Iranian society needs to accept them as fully human 'no matter how they were born or how they turn out to be' as Bank-Mikkelsen (1980: 57) argues. Therefore, if employment is to be provided for people with learning difficulties in Iran changing the negative attitudes of society towards them is essential. I suggest that it is the responsibility of the Iranian Welfare Organisation (IWO) to increase the awareness of non-disabled people (parents, employers, policy makers, service providers and others) of the abilities of people with learning difficulties

by developing Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), 'A system, which envisages using existing resources of manpower and material within the community to promote integration of disabled people in all spheres of life and activity' (Thomas, 1990, page 3), in Iran.

This study highlighted that one of the main factors influencing the perception of non-disabled people, particularly employers, was their level of awareness of the ability of people with learning difficulties. The findings of this study showed that all English supported employment providers and employers who were interviewed perceived people with learning difficulties as '*able to work*' as well as their non-disabled colleagues. All employers who had years of experience working with these employees perceived them as being '*able to work*' and offered paid jobs to them. The findings of this study suggested that providing work experience for employees with learning difficulties in the UK would increase employers' awareness of their ability. Providing work experience and voluntary work for such people who do not have anything to do in Iran would give them opportunities to work. Work experience could be obtained by providing *supported employment services*, as was suggested by the SEPs, as an important way of overcoming employment barriers.

A significant consideration is whether we can develop the supported employment services for people with learning difficulties (as defined in Chapter 3) in Iran. In this study, the UK SEPs identified a lack of consistency of suitable supported employment due to funding problems as one of the barriers to employment (see also Beyer et al, 2003 and 2004). As is mentioned above, the 2005 PMSU recommends that from 2006, DWP should increase the flexibility of budgets within its current SEP away from programmes which fail to integrate disabled people in mainstream employment into programmes which assist disabled people to progress towards open employment' (p. 159). Can we implement the supported employment scheme in Iran given the economical problems and lack of funding? Currently, there is not any type of supported employment services for those with learning difficulties in Iran. The opportunities for supported employment services for other disabled people are also very restricted, and available only to a minority of disabled people who live in some of the big cities. Therefore, it is clear that implementing the supported employment services in Iran within the definition of supported employment previously mentioned would be difficult because there would be a lack of funding. However, as is mentioned in Chapter Two, caring for disabled people and supporting them, particularly people with multiple

disabilities, is considered a blessing of God (Motahhari, 1981) in Iranian society. Therefore, active involvement in a voluntary organisation with the aim of helping disabled people is believed to be a social honour. In this regard, establishing some voluntary supported employment organisations for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties would be a way of providing supported employment services. As is mentioned in Chapter Two, the most important duties of the IWO are providing vocational training, assisting in offering vocational and employment placements and, drawing up the required regulations for preserving the rights of disabled people (ILDPR, 2004). In this regard, establishing some government supported employment organisations for disabled people would be another way to assist disabled people in obtaining the benefits of work. In Chapter Two, I mentioned that most disabled people who need rehabilitative services live in the rural area. The IWO, therefore, needs to provide supported employment services in the environment where people with learning difficulties live (Crishna, 1998). It needs to combine the efforts of disabled people themselves, their families, communities and the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services (ILO, UNESCO & WHO, 1994). This would be achieved by 'mobilizing local resources, where families and disabled people are the most important resource of all' (Sebeh cited in Crishna, 1998: 28) through implementing CBR.

This study highlighted that meaningful work in the British context meant more than just 'paid employment'. Such work added meaning to people's lives and enabled them to lead more socially fulfilling lives in society. In Iran, meaningful work is work that enables people to earn money and establish a happy family (Adibi, 2003). Thus the person who gains 'meaningful work' will have full participation in mainstream society. This research indicated that most informants were excluded from meaningful work and from participation in society due to disabling barriers. While obtaining meaningful work is difficult for people with learning difficulties in the UK, it might be impossible for them to obtain meaningful work in the Iranian society due to the negative attitudes of society towards people with learning difficulties, economical problems, lack of adequate education and training, lack of confidence, low esteem, and high unemployment among non-disabled people. It would be ideal for people with learning difficulties in Iran to have '*meaningful work*' as is defined in this research. But how?

This study showed that *Workstep* might be a way of enabling people to get meaningful work because the employment circumstances of the people who had been referred to work by the MAP, were significantly better than those of other employees who were referred by the other supported employment agencies which did not implement the Workstep programme (described in Chapter Seven). It is clear that implementing this programme in Iran within the definition of the Workstep that I previously mentioned would be difficult because there are lots of environmental, social, cultural, political and economical differences between Iran and England. As a matter of fact, Workstep was established for disabled British people with different backgrounds, beliefs, practices and cultures from disabled Iranian people. Therefore, a similar programme in Iran might not be a good way for people to get meaningful work. What is the solution? I suggest that the IWO need to take advantage of some of the success elements of Workstep, the 2005 PMSU, Valuing People (2001) and other employment practices and policies in the UK to draw upon the employment programme and policies for disabled people in Iranian society in order to deliver services in the community for and with disabled people (Wirz & Hartley, 1999; Thomas, 1990; Helander, 1993; Wirz & Thomas, 2002; Thomas & Thomas, 2002). In this regard, the IWO can assist most disabled people to gain employment by combining efforts of disabled people themselves, their families and communities. For example, the IWO could source job opportunities in gardening, horticulture and other fields for disabled people who live in rural areas by co-ordinating the support of parents, relatives and the local community.

This study showed that the *inflexibility of the British benefit system* was one of the employment barriers which worked against people and prevented them from getting paid jobs. The view of people with learning difficulties, employers and SEPs was that gaining paid employment could mean losing benefits. Despite emphasising that the inflexibility of the benefit system is a major factor preventing them from getting paid jobs, this study also supported the findings of the Heenan, 2002 and DoH, 2001 which emphasised that the social security benefits system is the main source of income for most disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties in the UK.

As is mentioned in Chapter Three, the ideology of the British benefit system is welfare to work. In this regard, the British government provided some benefits like Disabled Person's Tax Credit (DPTC) to make work more accessible for disabled people who are able to work more than 16 hours (Roulstone, 2003). In fact, the central thrust of policy

is to provide 'work for those who can, welfare for those who cannot' (Roulstone & Barnes, 2005: 20) As a result, the British government introduced a number of employment measures in its new welfare to work programme for those 'out of work'. These measures include Supported Employment and the New Deal for Disabled People (Roulstone, 2002; Riddell et al, 2002; Stanely, 2005; Gradwell, 2005). The Iranian benefit system is based on the provision of welfare for disabled people because they cannot work as a result of their 'individual tragedy'. The welfare system is also limited and only fifteen percent of disabled people receive benefits (IPWO, 2005). The main lesson that I learned from this research that could be implemented in the Iranian society is that the social security benefits system (welfare to work) in England, despite having some inflexibility, would be vital for all disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties in Iran. In developing the Iranian benefit system based on the UK system we need to avoid the problems of the benefit system in the UK as was mentioned in Chapter Three. It is clear that at the present time this development in Iran would be difficult due to attitudinal and economical problems and a lack of funding. However, by implementing the CBR programme in Iran most problems would be solved by collaboration and coordination of governmental and non-governmental organisations in the community (ILO, UNESCO and WHO, 1994).

This study showed that unenforcement of employment policy was a major employment barrier. Despite this unenforcement, a number of employment acts aimed at supporting disabled people in accessing employment were passed in the UK. *The Disability Rights Commission Code of Practice: Employment and Occupation* which was enacted in October 2004 was the most recent attempt aiming to overcome the limitations of the DDA. In Iran, disabled people have never had such an employment policy. According to the ILDPR (2004) all public and governmental organisations in Iran have an obligation to ensure that at least 3 percent of their workforces are disabled. This obligation has been law for more than four decades in Iran. However, the unenforcement of legislation was a barrier to employing disabled people in Iran as well. One of the difficulties is that the 2004 ILDPR (Appendix 6) is not the employment policy. It is a general legislation for disabled people that emphasises an obligation for all public and governmental agencies. It does not oblige voluntary and private sector organisations to employ disabled people. Therefore, the employment policy in the UK would be useful guidance for Iranian society to establish such employment policy. However, it is clear that while more than 6 million non-disabled people in Iran are

unemployed (Jam-e-Jam News, July, 2004) the attitude of most non-disabled people, particularly policy makers towards the employment of people with learning difficulties is negative. Establishing these kinds of policies would therefore be difficult and would need a lot of lobbying, mobilising and hard work.

According to *the 2001 White Paper, Valuing People* and *the 2005 PMSU, Improving the life chances of disabled people in the UK*, people with learning difficulties should have the same opportunities as other people in the community 'to lead full and active lives and should receive the support needed to make this possible' (DoH, 2001: 26). In this regard, the 2001 White Paper, *Valuing People* and the 2005 PMSU, set out the Government's objective of providing adequate opportunities for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties to lead full and independent lives in the community. The 2001 White Paper and the 2005 PMSU might serve to guide the Iranian government in relation to providing, for example, a green paper to set out the Government's objective of providing adequate opportunities for disabled people to support them in gaining independent lives in the community.

Robert Savage's story showed that *self-advocacy* had a significant effect on his life, particularly in assisting him to get employment and to learn various skills which enabled him to be independent in many aspects of his life. The results of this study highlighted that self-advocacy groups can provide valuable work opportunities for people. This study suggested that it is the responsibility of the government to promote citizen advocacy and self-advocacy groups for people with learning difficulties. The government can do so by providing a measure of financial support. The lesson that we can learn from these findings for Iranian society is that self-advocacy groups would be beneficial in Iran. Disability movements developed over the last three decades in Iran, particularly following the Iran-Iraq war. In implementing the slogan of most disabled people, 'NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US' (Barton, 2004: 287), the IWO, supported disabled people and their families to establish three organisations including people with visual, auditory and physical impairment to participate in discussion of issues such as employment, transport, housing, sports and social activity in the community. However, the voice of people with learning difficulties has been ignored in the movement. Instead, their parents have had opportunities to discuss above issues as a result of the negative assumption that people with learning difficulties were incapable of expressing their views.

This study highlighted many benefits of the self-advocacy groups. In this regard, the Iranian Welfare Organisation needs to support people with learning difficulties to give them a chance to recognise and to exercise their political rights and to convey their voices to others in society (Goodley, 2000; 2003) by establishing self-advocacy groups. As a researcher favouring the social model of disability, I believe that people with learning difficulties are 'fully-human' and they need to be accepted by society like all other people. The IWO needs to assist people with learning difficulties in the community to participate in making decisions about their future through the implementation of the CBR programme whose major objective is 'to ensure that people with disabilities are able to maximize their physical and mental abilities, have access to regular services and opportunities and achieve full social integration within their communities and their societies' (ILO, UNESCO & WHO, 1994).

This study showed that the informants were excluded from friendships and mainstream leisure. However, despite these *exclusions*, some informants like Robert Savage had opportunities for social contact with other people as a result of work. All informants stated that employment would support them in making friends and in having social relationships with colleagues in the workplace. This may be why some researchers argue that the workplace is one of the important settings where such people make friends (Firth & Rapley, 1990; Zetlin & Michael, 1988; Burchardt, 2000). The stories also showed that even informants like Lisa Watkins who was prevented by her parents from going out, had friendships with one of her non-disabled colleagues as a result of her voluntary work. The lesson that we can learn from these findings for Iranian society is that providing suitable employment for people with learning difficulties would assist them in having friendships and social contacts with others. These opportunities would help them to be integrated into the mainstream society in Iran.

The stories showed that despite the exclusion of most informants from mainstream leisure activities, some like Robert had engaged in several leisure activities. As Ager et al (2001) argued, leisure activities for people require a high degree of personal autonomy. Robert had high autonomy in selecting and organising his own leisure activities. Therefore, this study highlighted that if people with learning difficulties are not denied the opportunity for leisure activity by their parents and if they have a chance to practice personal autonomy, they would be able to select and to organise leisure activities. In Iranian society, people with learning difficulties are excluded from leisure

activities whether mainstream or segregated. In fact, they are not accorded the full range of rights that other citizens have because, there are many 'socio-structural and ideological barriers to the exercise of full citizenship rights by people with learning difficulties' (Walmsley, 1991: 219). They are seen as second class citizens (Hughes, 2004: 64) and the perception of non-disabled people of them is that they are 'forever children'. This denies citizenship to people with learning difficulties in society (Lawson, 2003: 118).

It is mentioned above that implementing most of these suggestions in Iranian society might seem difficult due to negative attitudes of society towards people with learning difficulties and to the economical problems. However, based on my personal experience in Iran, I will strongly argue that implementing the above suggestions would be possible if

1. The IWO develops the CBR programme in all cities in Iran. The CBR programme has been implemented since 1990 in Iran. It is a national programme running under the aegis of the Welfare Organisation, but within the Primary Health Care (PHC)²⁵ referral framework. The CBR programme was piloted in the Semnan province in two districts: Miami and Shahrod cities. As a result of the successful implementation of CBR in those cities, the Iranian Welfare Organisation allowed the programme to be implemented in six other cities in Iran, particularly in Isfahan where I was the rehabilitation director in the IPWO. The IWO needs to implement the CBR programme through the PHC in rural areas of 28 provinces in Iran and to include all governmental and non-governmental services that provide assistance to communities (ILO, UNESCO & WHO, 1994).

2. The Iranian government establishes a ministry with specific responsibility for disabled people. Currently, the IWO is responsible for providing welfare and rehabilitative services for disabled people in Iran. However, the IWO, economically and politically, does not have enough power to provide rehabilitative services for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties. As a result, only a limited number of such people receive the rehabilitative services. Those recipients live mainly in urban

²⁵ PHC is organised as a four-level referral system:

Health house: currently, there are 16, 000 health houses in Iran, each serving a population of 1500 and staffed by one or two health workers (Behvarze) who are trained for two years and receives 2 month training in CBR and they are key workers in CBR.

Rural health centre: these normally cover 5-6 health houses, and the staff included a generalist doctor and middle level workers (Kardans) who have undergone 2 years of training, including 2 weeks in CBR

District centre: in which there are specialised personnel.

Province levels: there are other specialised services, such as hospital, clinics, and orthopaedic.

areas. The reasons for the denial of rehabilitative services to all who are in need are the negative attitudes of service providers towards people with learning difficulties and the non-cooperation of other organisations with the IWO. If the Iranian government appoints a minister with a specific responsibility for disabled people (a disabled person or a professional in disability studies who knows disabled people and their needs) in the Iranian government, that minister might be in a better position to positively influence policy. That minister could also help to increase disability awareness among people in society.

In order to overcome employment barriers and provide rehabilitative services for disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties I argue that 'disabling barriers...need to be actively addressed by government. Without action, existing behaviours, attitudes and structures will continue to marginalise disabled people...government's action reflects society's responsibility to make sure that all people are able to live with dignity and to participate in and contribute to their local communities' (PMSU, 2005: 50-51). In this regard, establishing a National Vocational Rehabilitation Committee would be an important step. That committee should comprise representatives of the following ministries: Welfare; Labor & Social Affairs; Education; Agriculture; Commerce; Culture & Islamic Guidance; Economic Affairs & Finance; Health; Housing & Urban Development; Information & Communications Technology and Transportation. This committee would obligate all ministers to co-operate with the ministry with responsibility for disabled people in providing rehabilitative service for such people. In this regard, I argue that making it compulsory for people to do something for disabled people may not be a good way to proceed. However, because disabled people are denied their rights by society, legislation might be a good way to establish disabled people's rights in society.

It must be emphasised that this study was a small one in which the sample was not representative of adults with the label of 'learning difficulties', employers and SEPs in the UK. The informants involved in the study only included people who were working in Northtown through four supported employment agencies. Hence, this study highlighted the need for further research to investigate the employment opportunities for adults with learning difficulties with a larger sample. However, even taking into account this limitation, the results of the current study are alarming. The circumstances of employment of the 200 adults studied are poor and the six workers were excluded from mainstream education and employment.

This thesis has focused on the reality of the lives of people with learning difficulties in order to convey their voices. Therefore, this research is expected to develop the literature on the lives of people with learning difficulties particularly with regards to employment within the social model of disability. The view that ‘individual impairment’ or ‘personal tragedy’ is the main reason for the exclusion of people with learning difficulties from mainstream employment and education is thus strongly rejected.

Hopes for the future: recommendations for research in England and Iran

This research has identified some areas where further study may be valuable and helpful:

- Further information about the benefit of employment for people with learning difficulties is needed. There is need too, to investigate how employment affects the social situations of this group. In this regard, a comparative study of people who are paid and those who are unpaid needs to be done.
- Workstep in this research had many benefits for people with learning difficulties. It enabled them to get paid employment. This study recommends that further information about the benefits of Workstep, particularly the nature of the relationship of people with learning difficulties with their employers and colleagues in the workplace be obtained through research.
- Research about the nature of the social and employment situation of people who left the special schools needs to be done to determine the effects of education on the lives and employment of people and also to determine how the current educational system cover the needs of this group with regard to getting jobs in the labour market.
- Research to determine the best way of transition from school to employment for young people with learning difficulties need to be done.
- Further information about the benefit of the self-advocacy and its effect on the employment of people with learning difficulties needs to be obtained.

I hope that this study would contribute to the development of services for people with learning difficulties in my home country, Iran. When I go back to Iran, hopefully I will

be in a position to influence the policy for disabled people. That is why I have made these recommendations for change and research.

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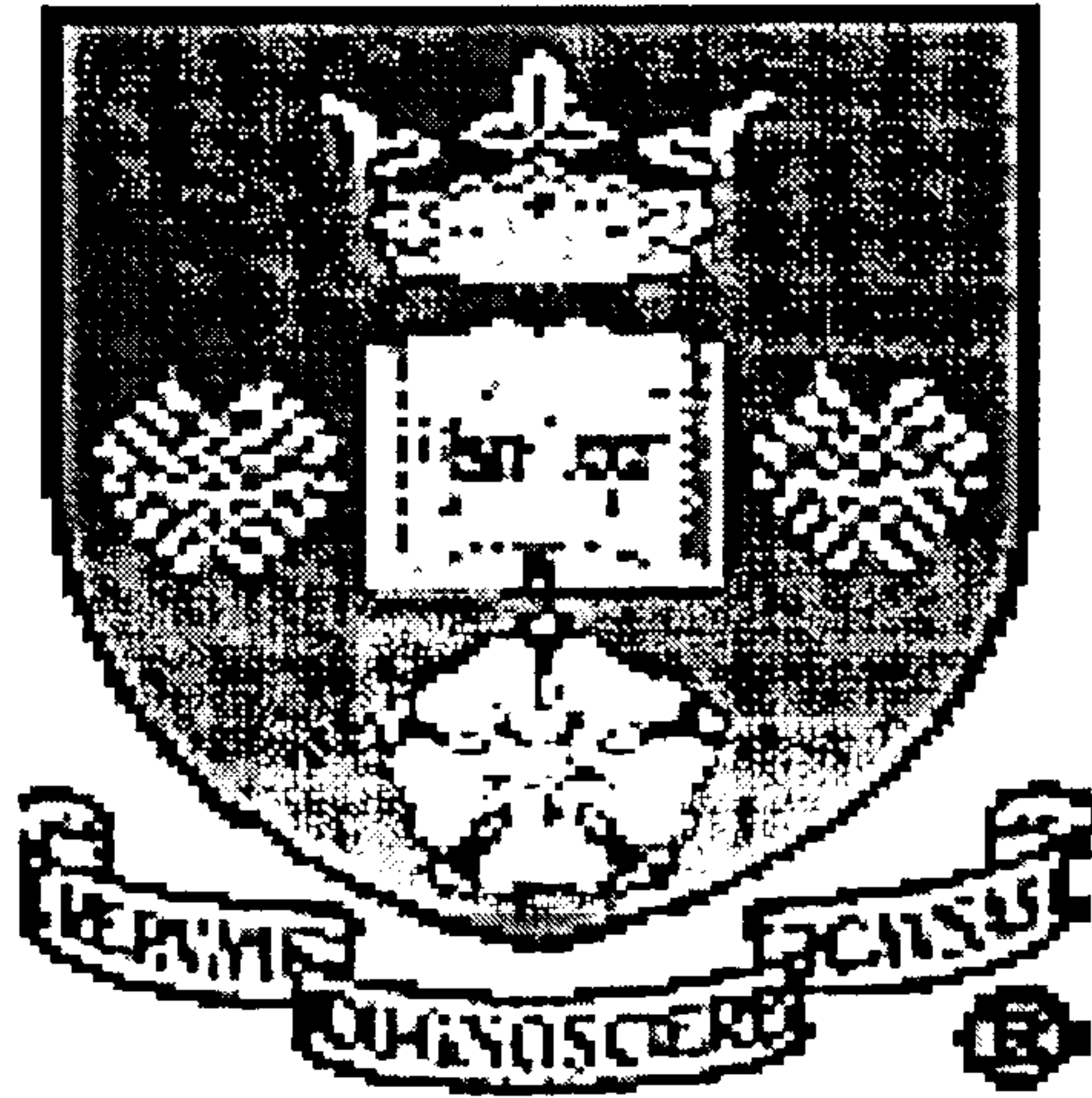
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APPENDIX 1: A SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



University of Sheffield

School of Education

Survey of Employment Opportunities for Adults with Mild and Moderate Learning Difficulties in Northtown

Researcher:

Ghasem Norouzi

Supervised by:

**Dr Dan Goodley
Dr Pat Sikes**

388 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2JA

IMPORTANT NOTES

- 1. This questionnaire is to be completed by employers in Northtown.
- 2. Please answer every question

Thank you very much indeed for your help

NAME OF EMPLOYER

TELEPHONE:

ADDRESS:

NAME OF ORGANSATION

TYPE OF ORGANISATION (e.g. limited company, public authority, voluntary body).....
.....

Q1. What is the size of your company?

- Small ☐
- Medium ☐
- Large ☐

Q2. How many employees are currently working in your place of employment?

.....

Q3. Do you employ any people with learning difficulties?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐ (Go to question number10)

Q4. How many employees with learning difficulties are currently working in your place of employment?

Q5. How long have you been working with people with learning difficulties?

- Less than 1 Year ☐
- 1-5 Years ☐
- 6-10 Years ☐
- 11-15 Years ☐
- 16-20 Years ☐
- More than 20 Years ☐

Q6. Can you give me the following information about the people with learning difficulties you have employed in the last ten years?

Q9. If yes, please write the reason why they left?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Q10. Are you sympathetic to the idea of employing people with learning difficulties?

- Yes

☐ (go to question 11)
- No

☐ (go to question 12)

Q11. What encouraged you to employ people with learning difficulties?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Q12. What prevents you from employing people with learning difficulties?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Q13. What would make it easier for you to employ people with learning difficulties?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Q14. What do you think the vocational barriers for adults with learning difficulties are?.....
.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q15. What are your suggestions for overcoming these barriers?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q 16. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements (please tick one box in each row)

	Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Strongly				
Disagree		Agree		
Adults with learning Difficulties should have the opportunity to work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of communicating with employer in the work place have the effect of decreasing their chances of employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most employers' think adults with LD are unable to work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adults with LD need to attain good vocational training and qualifications for successful employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employing people with LD is a positive asset for my Company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training and information for employers would increase the				

chance of people with LD being employed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More support in the workplace would encourage the employer to employ people with LD	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employing people with LD brings down the image of the company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We would be most interested to know about any other views you may have about the employment of people with moderate and mild learning difficulties in Northtown. Please add below any other comments that you feel are important.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

I should be very pleased to have the opportunity to talk directly with you if you would like to expand on any of the views expressed above.

Finally, may I thank you again for taking the time to complete my questionnaire.

Appendix 2: Interview schedule for employers

1. Could please give me some information about your work? What do you do?
2. Generally, how many employees with learning difficulties and without learning difficulties do you have in your company?
3. How long have you been working with employees with learning difficulties in your workplace?
4. Did you have any experiences of working with these people before? How did you find them
5. Have you had any employees with learning difficulties who left your place of employment? If yes, why did they leave? Where did they go to?
6. Why did you employ people with learning difficulties?
7. What do you think about employment/job/work for people with learning difficulties?
8. What jobs do they do in your company?
9. How did you employ these people? Were they referred to you by the supported employment agency?
10. Why are most people with learning difficulties unemployed?
11. What is your suggestion to overcome employment barriers for these people?
12. What skills do employees with learning difficulties need if they want to be successful workers?
13. What would make it easier for you to employ people with learning difficulties in your company?
14. Do you have any contact with any supported employment agency? If yes, what types of support usually do you receive from them?
15. Is there any employee with learning difficulties receives support from any supported employment agency? If yes, what type of support do they receive from the supported employment agency?
16. If you face any difficulties with one of your employees with learning difficulties, how would you solve the problem? Do you get any support from others to solve the difficulty?
17. Since you started your work with these people, you would have some experiences about people who had difficulties at work. Could you please give

me details about the nature of the difficulties that these people faced? How did you support them?

18. Do you have any contact with their families?

19. If you were a government official, what plans would you implement to solve the employment problems of people with learning difficulties?

20. Some people say that people with learning difficulties are unemployed because they are unable or because they have a lack of qualification. What do you think?

21. Do you have any comment/suggestion about employment for people with learning difficulties?

APPENDIX 3: Interview schedule for supported employment providers

1. Could you please give me details about your job in this agency?
2. How long have you been working with people with learning difficulties (in your current and previous job/jobs)?
3. What do you think about employment/job/work for people with learning difficulties (your ideal about the value and the importance of the work for these people)?
4. When you refer people into work, were they successful in doing the job?
Could you please give me more details about their jobs?
5. Could you please give me more job details about the people that you are responsible for providing support?
6. How exactly do you support employers?
7. How exactly do you support employees with learning difficulties?
8. Since you started your work with these people, you would have some experiences about people who had difficulties at work. Could you please give me details about the nature of the difficulties that these people faced?
How did you support them?
9. I think you have referred many employees with learning difficulties into work, and perhaps, you have some experiences about people who left their work after a few months or a few years. Could you tell me about your experience with these people if you had someone? (Why they left, when they left, what they do, do you have any contact with them, where are they, what are they doing, detail about their jobs if they work).
10. You may have had some experiences regarding people who left their work after a few months or a few years. Could you tell me about your experiences with these people?
11. Do you get any support from families/carers when you want to refer the person into work?
12. How did you find their views about employment for their children? Have they supported their children to get jobs?
13. If you were an employer would you be interested in employing these people in your company? Why? Why not?

14. What barriers to employment do people with learning difficulties face?
Why are most people with learning difficulties unemployed?
15. How can we overcome the employment barriers for people with learning difficulties?
16. If you had a big responsibility in the government, what would you plan to do for the employment of people with learning difficulties? (More details about the characteristics of the plan).
17. What skills do employees with learning difficulties need to become successful workers?
18. Do you have any comments/suggestions about employment for people with learning difficulties?

APPENDIX 4

Design for statistical information

N	Gender		Age	Job Title or Post	Full or Part time work		Type of work (E.g. employ, Voluntary or Work Experience	How Many Hours Per Week	Salary or Wage Per Week	How Many Years Do he/she Work	Type of Employer	Marriage		Living With Who? Parent Partner Friend Or...	Where She/he Does Live? Private Hostel	Benefit		Type Of Benefit	How Much
	F	M			F	P						Yes	No			Yes	No		
1																			
2																			
3																			
4																			
5																			
6																			
7																			
8																			
9																			
10																			
11																			
12																			
13																			



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Appendix 5

Letter for people with learning difficulties

10th October 2001

Head of School
Professor Wilfred Carr

Department of Educational Studies
The Education Building
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2JA

Telephone: 0114 2228162

Fax: 0114 279 6236

Email: edp00gn@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Sir or Madam

My name is Ghasem Norouzi. I am from the University of Sheffield. I am researching work opportunities for disabled people with learning difficulties.

I would very much like to talk with you about your experience of being at work. If you would like to take part in the research or to find out more about it please fill in the enclosed reply slip and return to me in the envelope. Every thing you tell me will be confidential.

Yours sincerely,

Ghasem Norouzi

PhD Student



I would like to take part

I am not interested

Name.....

Address.....

E-mail.....Telephone.....

Signature

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Appendix 5 Letter for employers

4th February 2002

Head of School
Professor Wilfred Carr

Department of Educational Studies
The Education Building
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2JA

Telephone: 0114 2228162

Fax: 0114 279 6236

Email: edp00gn@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Sir or Madam

I am a full-time Ph. D student in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield. My research subject is "Employment opportunities for adults with mild and moderate learning difficulties in Northtown. I am beginning my fieldwork in the area of training and employment opportunities for adults with mild and moderate learning difficulties.

I appreciate that you are very busy, but I should be grateful if you could answer the following questions and return in the enclosed envelope. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Finally, I wish to assure you that any information you provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence, and according to the Ethical Principles adopted by the University of Sheffield. Further, no material using your data will be published without your express and written permission.

Yours sincerely,

Ghasem Norouzi

PhD Student

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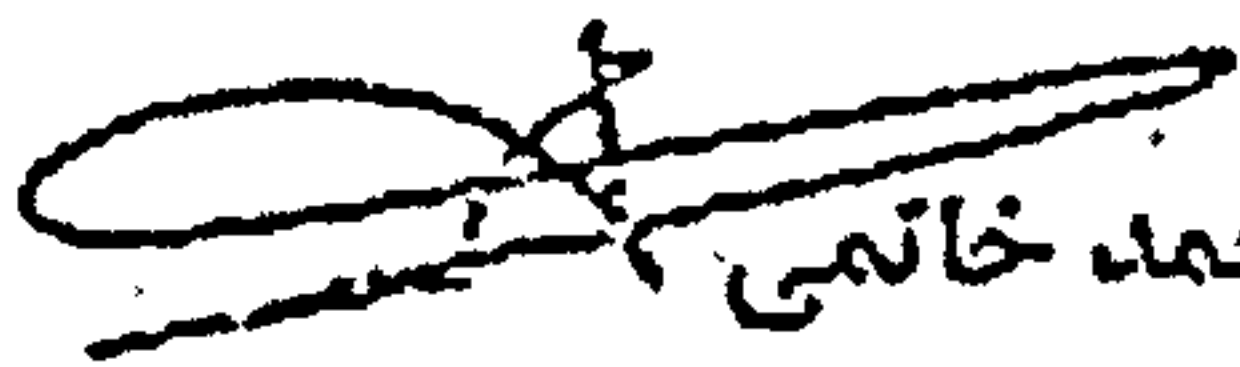
رئیس جمهور

بسمه تعالی

۱۱۶۷۱
۸۳/۳/۱۷

وزارت بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی

قانون جامع حمایت از حقوق معلولان که در جلسه علنی روز چهارشنبه مورخ شانزدهم اردیبهشت ماه یکهزار و سیصد و هشتاد و سه مجلس شورای اسلامی تصویب و بدون اراده نظر از سوی شورای نگهبان در مهلت مقرر در اصل نود و چهارم قانون اساسی طی نامه شماره ۱۶۰۷۸ مورخ ۱۳۸۳/۳/۶ مجلس شورای اسلامی واصل گردیده است، به پیوست جهت اجراء ابلاغ می گردد. /ح


سید محمد خاتمی
رئیس جمهور

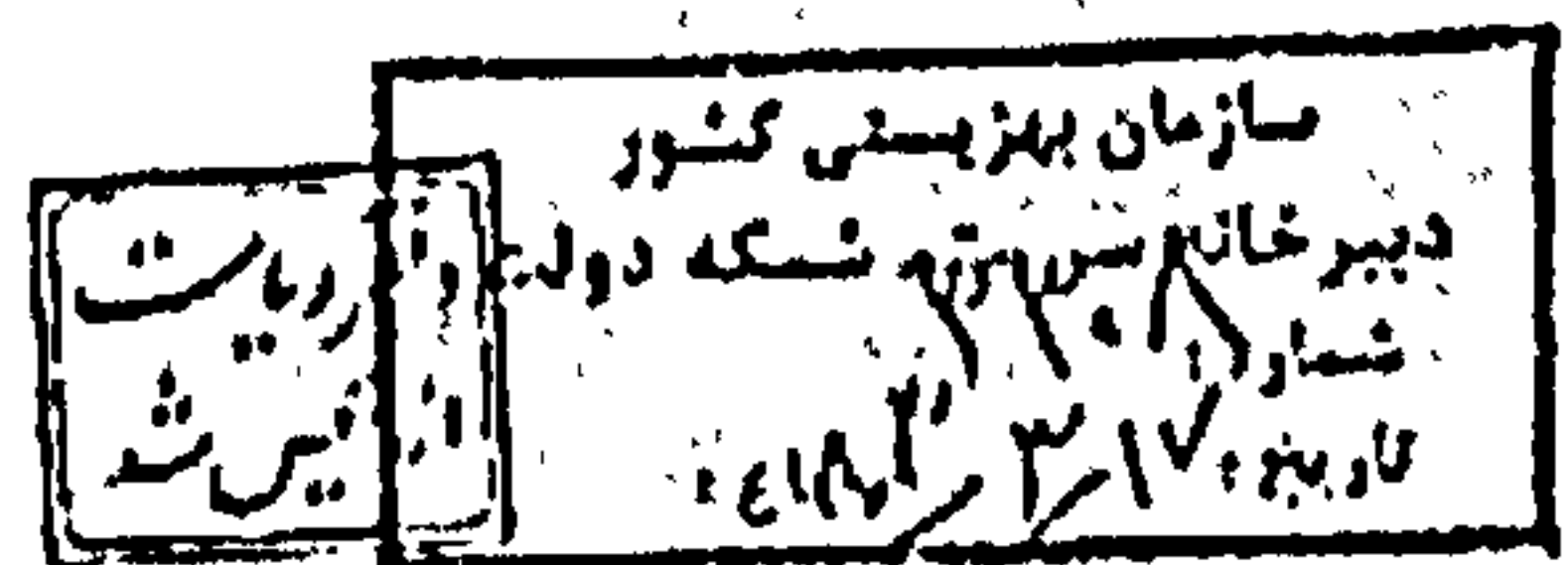
رونوشت:

دکتر مقام معظم رهبری - کلبه وزارتخانه ها، سازمانها، مؤسسات دولتی، نهادهای انقلاب اسلامی و استانداریهای سراسر کشور - دفتر رئیس جمهور - مجمع تشخیص مصلحت نظام - دفتر ریاست لویه قضا - دفتر معاون اول رئیس جمهور - دیوان محاسبات - اداره قوانین مجلس شورای اسلامی - دفتر هیات دولت - اداره کل حقوقی - اداره کل تدوین و تنفیج قوانین و مقررات کشور - اداره کل امور مجلس - روزنامه رسمی جمهوری اسلامی ایران (جهت درج در روزنامه) ابلاغ می شود. ۴۸۱۱۳

رونوشت:

- ۱- معاونین و ابواب بخشی و استخال و پشتیبانی جهت اطلاع و اقدام
- ۲- دیوان کل مترم بهرستی استانها جهت اطلاع و اقدام

دکتر راه پیمانی
۸۳/۳/۱۸





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مجلس شورای اسلامی

دفتر رئیس

شماره ۱۶۰۷۸

تاریخ ۶۰۳/۳/۱۳۸۳

پوست

مجلس

قانون جامع حمایت از حقوق معلولان

ماده ۱ - دولت موظف است زمینه های لازم را برای تأمین حقوق معلولان فراهم و حمایت های لازم را از آنها به عمل آورد.

تبصره - منظور از معلول در این قانون به افرادی اطلاق می گردد که به تشخیص کمیسیون پزشکی سازمان بهزیستی بر اثر ضایعه جسمی، ذهنی، روانی یا توأم؛ اختلال مستمر و قابل توجهی در سلامت و کارائی عمومی وی ایجاد گردد، به طوری که موجب کاهش استقلال فرد در زمینه های اجتماعی و اقتصادی شود. (ماده ۱۰)

ماده ۲ - کلیه وزارتخانه ها، سازمانها و مؤسسات و شرکتهای دولتی و نهادهای عمومی و انقلابی موظفند در طراحی، تولید و احداث ساختمانها و اماکن عمومی و معابر و وسایل خدماتی به نحوی عمل نمایند که امکان دسترسی و بهره مندی از آنها برای معلولان همچون افراد عادی فراهم گردد. (ماده ۱۱)

تبصره ۱ - وزارتخانه ها، سازمانها و مؤسسات و شرکتهای دولتی و نهادهای عمومی و انقلابی موظفند جهت دسترسی و بهره مندی معلولان، ساختمانها و اماکن عمومی، ورزشی و تفریحی، معابر و وسایل خدماتی موجود را در چارچوب بودجه های مصوب سالانه، خود مناسب سازی نمایند.

تبصره ۲ - شهرداریها موظفند از صدور پروانه احداث و بایابان کار برای آن تعداد از ساختمانها و اماکن عمومی و معابر که استانداردهای تخصصی مربوط به معلولان را رعایت نکرده باشند خودداری نمایند.

تبصره ۳ - سازمان بهزیستی کشور مجاز است بر امر مناسب سازی ساختمانها و اماکن دولتی و عمومی دستگاههای مذکور در ماده فوق نظارت و گزارشات اقدامات آنها را درخواست نماید.



جمهوری اسلامی ایران

مجلس شورای اسلامی

دفتر رئیس

پست

شماره ۱۶۰۷۸

تاریخ ۱۳۷۷/۱۲/۶

پست

تبصره ۲ - آئین نامه اجرایی ماده فوق ظرف سه ماه مشترکاً توسط وزارت مسکن و شهرسازی، سازمان بهزیستی کشور و سازمان مدیریت و برنامه ریزی کشور تهیه و به تصویب هیأت وزیران خواهد رسید.

ماده ۳ - سازمان بهزیستی کشور موظف است در چارچوب اعتبارات مصوب در قوانین بودجه سالانه اقدامات ذیل را به عمل آورد:

الف - تأمین خدمات توانبخشی، حمایتی، آموزشی و حرفه آموزی مورد نیاز معلولان با مشارکت خانواده های معلولان و همکاری بخش غیردولتی (خصوصی، تعاونی، خیریه) و پرداخت یارانه (کمک هزینه) به مراکز غیردولتی و خانواده ها.

ب - گسترش مراکز خاص نگهداری، آموزشی و توانبخشی معلولان واجد شرایط (معلولان نیازمند، معلولان بی سرپرست، معلولان مجبور الهویه، معلولان با ناتوانیهای رفتاری) با همکاری بخش غیردولتی و پرداخت تسهیلات اعتباری و یارانه (کمک هزینه) به آنها.

ج - تأمین و تحویل وسایل کمک توانبخشی مورد نیاز افراد معلول.

د - گسترش کارگاههای آموزشی، حمایتی و تولیدی معلولان و ارائه خدمات توانبخشی حرفه ای به معلولان جهت توانمندسازی آنان.

تبصره - کارگاههای آموزشی، حمایتی و تولیدی معلولان موضوع ماده فوق از شمول قانون کار مصوب ۱۳۶۹/۸/۲۹ مستثنی خواهد بود.

ماده ۴ - معلولان می توانند در استفاده از امکانات ورزشی، تفریحی، فرهنگی و وسایل حمل و نقل دولتی (مترو، هواپیما، قطار) از تسهیلات نیمه بها بهره مند گردند.

تبصره - وزارت فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی، سازمان تربیت بدنی و شهرداریها موظفند کتابخانه، اماکن ورزشی، پارک و اماکن تفریحی خود را به نحوی احداث و تجهیز نمایند که



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شماره ۱۶۰۷۸

تاریخ ۱۳۴۳/۱۳/۲۶

پروژه

مبحث

امکان بهره‌مندی معلولان فراهم گردد.

ماده ۵ - افراد تحت سرپرستی معلولان با معرفی سازمان بهزیستی کشور تحت پوشش بیمه خدمات درمانی و معلولان تحت پوشش بیمه خدمات درمانی و بیمه مکمل درمانی قرار می‌گیرند.

ماده ۶ - یکی از فرزندان اولیائی که خود ناتوان و معلول بوده (مرد و یا یکی از آنها معلول باشد) و با حداقل دو نفر از فرزندان آنها ناتوان و معلول باشد از انجام خدمت وظیفه عمومی معاف می‌گردد.

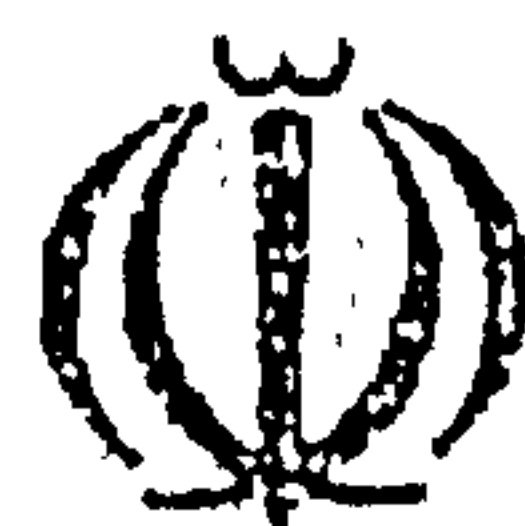
تبصره - همسرانی که زن ناتوان و معلول خود را سرپرستی می‌نمایند مادامی که سرپرستی همسر ناتوان و معلول را برعهده داشته باشند از انجام خدمت وظیفه عمومی معاف می‌گردند.

ماده ۷ - دولت موظف است جهت ایجاد فرصت‌های شغلی برای افراد معلول تسهیلات ذیل را فراهم نماید:

الف - اختصاص حداقل سه درصد (۳٪) از مجوزهای استخدامی (رسمی، پیمانی، کارگری) دستگاههای دولتی و عمومی اعم از وزارتخانه‌ها، سازمانها، مؤسسات، شرکتها و نهادهای عمومی و انقلابی و دیگر دستگاههایی که از بودجه عمومی کشور استفاده می‌نمایند به افراد معلول واجد شرایط.

ب - تأمین حق بیمه سهم کارفرما توسط سازمان بهزیستی کشور و پرداخت آن به کارفرمایانی که افراد معلول را به کار می‌گیرند.

ج - پرداخت تسهیلات اعتباری به واحدهای تولیدی، خدماتی، همرانی و صنعتی و کارگاههای تولیدی حمایتی در مقابل اشتغال افراد معلول به میزانی که در قوانین بودجه



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دفتر رئیس

شماره ۱۶۰۷۸

تاریخ ۶۸۳ / ۳ / ۶۰

پست

مجلس

سالانه مشخص می گردد.

د - پرداخت تسهیلات اعتباری خود اشنالی (وجوه اداره شده) به افراد معلول به
میزانی که در قوانین بودجه سالانه مشخص می گردد.

ه - پرداخت تسهیلات اعتباری (وجوه اداره شده) جهت احداث واحدهای
تولیدی و خدماتی اشنالزا به شرکتهای و مؤسساتی که بیش از شصت درصد (۶۰٪) سهام و
سرمایه آنها متعلق به افراد معلول است.

و - اختصاص حداقل شصت درصد (۶۰٪) از پستهای سازمانی تلفنچی (اپراتور
تلفن) دستگاهها، شرکتهای دولتی و نهادهای عمومی به افراد نابینا و کم بینا و معاولان
جسمی، حرکتی.

ز - اختصاص حداقل شصت درصد (۶۰٪) از پستهای سازمانی متصدی دفتری و
ماشین نویسی دستگاهها، شرکتهای و نهادهای عمومی به معلولین جسمی، حرکتی.

تبصره ۱ - کلیه وزارتخانه ها، سازمانها، مؤسسات و شرکتهای دولتی و نهادهای
عمومی و انقلابی مجازند تا سقف مجوزهای استخدامی سالانه خود، افراد نابینا و ناشنوا
و معلولین ضایعات نخاعی واجد شرایط را رأساً به صورت موردی و بدون برگزاری آزمون
استخدامی به کار گیرند.

تبصره ۲ - سازمان مدیریت و برنامه ریزی کشور موظف است سه درصد (۳٪) از
مجوزهای استخدامی سالانه وزارتخانه ها، سازمانها، مؤسسات دولتی، شرکتهای و نهادهای
عمومی و انقلابی را کسر و در اختیار سازمان بهزیستی کشور قرار دهد تا نسبت به برگزاری
آزمون استخدامی اختصاصی برای معلولین واجد شرایط با همکاری سازمان مدیریت و
برنامه ریزی کشور اقدام و معلولین واجد شرایط پذیرفته شده را حسب مورد به دستگاه
مربوطه معرفی نماید.

تبصره ۳ - سازمان بهزیستی کشور مجاز است در قالب اعتبارات مصوب خود،
صندوق فرصتهای شغلی معاولان و مددجویان بهزیستی را ایجاد و اساسنامه آن را



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به تصویب هیأت وزیران برساند.

تبصره ۲ - سازمان آموزش فنی و حرفه‌ای کشور موظف است آموزش‌های لازم فنی و حرفه‌ای را متناسب با بازار کار برای معاولان به صورت رایگان و تلفیقی تأمین نماید.

ماده ۸ - معاولان نیازمند واجد شرایط در زمینه مختلف می‌توانند با معرفی سازمان بهزیستی کشور از آموزش رایگان در واحدهای آموزشی تابعه وزارتخانه‌های آموزش و پرورش، علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری، بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی و دیگر دستگاه‌های دولتی و نیز دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی، بهره‌مند گردند.

تبصره - آئین‌نامه اجرایی این ماده مشترکاً توسط سازمان بهزیستی کشور و وزارتخانه‌های مذکور و دانشگاه آزاد اسلامی ظرف مدت دو ماه پس از ابلاغ این قانون تهیه و به تصویب هیأت وزیران خواهد رسید.

ماده ۹ - وزارت مسکن و شهرسازی، بانک مسکن و بنیاد مسکن انقلاب اسلامی موظفند حداقل ده درصد (۱۰٪) از واحدهای مسکونی احداثی استیجاری و ارزان قیمت خود را به معاولان نیازمند فاقد مسکن اختصاص داده و با معرفی سازمان بهزیستی کشور در اختیار آنان قرار دهند.

تبصره ۱ - سیستم بانکی کشور مکلف است، تسهیلات اعتباری بارانه دارد مورد نیاز احداث و خرید مسکن معاولان را تأمین و به معاولان با تعاونی‌های آنها و با مؤسسات خیریه‌ای که برای معاولان، مسکن احداث می‌نمایند پرداخت کند.

تبصره ۲ - سازمان ملی زمین و مسکن موظف است زمین مورد نیاز احداث واحدهای مسکونی افراد معلول فاقد مسکن را به نرخ کارشناسی تهیه و در اختیار افراد مذکور و با تعاونی‌ها و مؤسسات خیریه‌ای که برای آنان مسکن احداث می‌نمایند قرار دهد.



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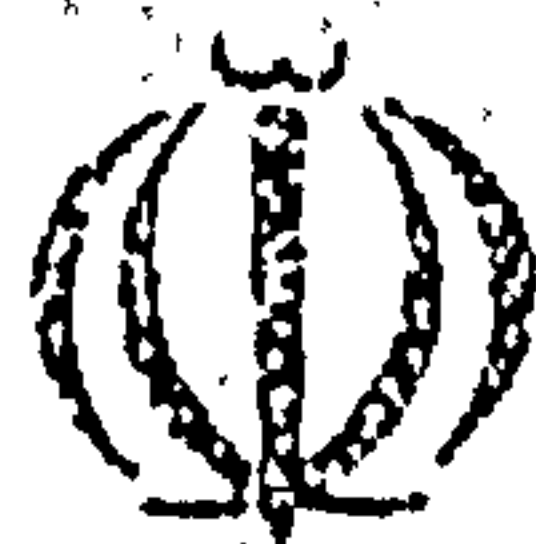
تبصره ۳ - معلولان از پرداخت هزینه های صدور پروانه ساختمانی، آماده سازی زمین و عوارض نوسازی معاف می گردند.

تبصره ۴ - سازمان بهزیستی کشور موظف است در قالب اعتبارات مصوب خود در قوانین بودجه سالانه و کمک های بارانه ای اشخاص حقیقی و حقوقی نسبت به احداث واحدهای مسکونی برای معلولان و مددجویان اقدام و مالکیت یا بهره برداری آنها را مطابق آئین نامه ای که سازمان بهزیستی کشور با همکاری وزارت مسکن و شهرسازی و سازمان مدیریت و برنامه ریزی کشور تهیه و به تصویب هیأت وزیران می رسد به معلولان و مددجویان واجد شرایط واگذار نماید.

ماده ۱۰ - میزان کمک هزینه (بارانه) پرداختی سازمان بهزیستی کشور به مراکز غیردولتی (روزانه و شبانه روزی) بابت نگهداری، خدمات توانبخشی و آموزشی و حرفه آموزی معلولان همه ساله با در نظر گرفتن نرخ تمام شده خدمات و تورم سالانه مشترکاً توسط سازمان بهزیستی کشور و سازمان مدیریت و برنامه ریزی کشور و وزارت بازرگانی تهیه و قبل از خرداد ماه هر سال به تصویب هیأت وزیران خواهد رسید.

ماده ۱۱ - مرکز آمار ایران مکلف است در سرشماری های عمومی جمعیت کشور به نحوی برنامه ریزی نماید که جمعیت افراد معلول به تفکیک نوع معلولیت آنها مشخص گردد.

ماده ۱۲ - سازمان صدا و سیما و جمهوری اسلامی ایران موظف است حداقل دو ساعت از برنامه های خود را در هر هفته در زمان مناسب به برنامه های سازمان بهزیستی کشور و آشنائی مردم با توانمندی های معلولین اختصاص دهد.



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بیمشالی

ماده ۱۳ - سازمان بهزیستی کشور موظف است با ایجاد ساز و کار مناسب، نسبت به قیومت افراد معلول اقدام نماید، دادگاهها موظفند در نصب یا عزل قیوم افراد معلول صرفاً از طریق سازمان مذکور عمل و مبادرت به صدور حکم نمایند.

تبصره ۱ - سازمان بهزیستی کشور موظف است جهت دفاع از حقوق افراد معلول، در محاکم قضائی وکیل تعیین نموده و به دادگاه مربوطه معرفی کند.

تبصره ۲ - سازمان بهزیستی کشور مجاز است در موارد ضروری جهت جلوگیری از تضییع حقوق معلولان بی سرپرست به نمایندگی از آنها در دادگاهها طرح دعوا و دادخواهی نماید.

تبصره ۳ - آئین نامه اجرایی این ماده ظرف مدت سه ماه مشترکاً توسط سازمان بهزیستی کشور و وزارت دادگستری تهیه و به تصویب هیأت وزیران خواهد رسید.

ماده ۱۴ - مؤدیان مالیاتی می توانند از طریق سازمان بهزیستی کشور و با نظارت آن جهت احداث مراکز توانبخشی، درمانی و حرفه آموزی و مسکن مورد نیاز افراد معلول اقدام نمایند. گواهی هزینه مؤدیان مالیاتی در موارد فوق که به تأیید سازمان بهزیستی کشور رسیده باشد به عنوان هزینه قابل قبول مالیاتی آنان تلقی می گردد.

تبصره - آئین نامه اجرایی این ماده مشترکاً توسط سازمان بهزیستی کشور و وزارت امور اقتصادی و دارائی ظرف مدت سه ماه پس از ابلاغ قانونی تهیه و به تصویب هیأت وزیران خواهد رسید.

ماده ۱۵ - رؤسای سازمانهای بهزیستی استانها مجازند در جلسات شورای برنامه ریزی و توسعه استان و گروههای کاری آن به عنوان عضو شرکت نمایند.

تبصره - به منظور کمک به اشتغال معلولان و مددجویان، رئیس سازمان بهزیستی کشور مجاز است در جلسات شورای عالی اشتغال شرکت نماید.



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ماده ۱۶ - اعتبار مورد نیاز اجرای این قانون از محل منابع زیر تأمین می گردد:

۱ - از محل اعتباراتی که دستگاهها و نهادها حسب وظایف قانونی در قرائین بودجه سالانه منظور می نمایند.

۲ - از محل اعتبارات هزینه ای و تملک سرمایه ای سازمان بهزیستی کشور که تاکنون از محل اعتبارات مذکور خدمات لازم را به معلولان ارائه می داده است.

۳ - از محل وجوه واصله از اجرای طرح هدفمند کردن یارانه ها در کشور.

۴ - از محل صرفه جویی در هزینه های دستگاهها، شرکتهای دولتی و نهادهای عمومی که میزان سالانه آن برای هر یک از دستگاهها و شرکتهای و نهادهای و هیأت وزیران مشخص می نماید.

تبصره ۱ - آئین نامه اجرائی این ماده توسط سازمان بهزیستی کشور و سازمان مدیریت و برنامه ریزی کشور تهیه و به تصویب هیأت وزیران خواهد رسید.

تبصره ۲ - آن تعداد و باب بخشی از مواد این قانون که نیاز به اعتبار جدید باشد مادامی که اعتبار لازم از محل منابع مذکور در این ماده تأمین نگردد، اجرا نخواهد شد.

قانون فوق مشتمل بر شانزده ماده و بیست و چهار تبصره در جلسه علنی روز چهارشنبه مورخ شانزدهم اردیبهشت ماه یکهزار و سیصد و هشتاد و سه مجلس شورای اسلامی تصویب و نظر شورای نگهبان در غایت مقبول و تصویب اصل بود و چهارم (۹۴) قانون اساسی جمهوری اسلامی ایران و اصل نگذرد.

مهدی کروچی

رئیس مجلس شورای اسلامی